



**Public Consultation on Estyn's
Proposed Changes to the Inspection
of Education and Training in Wales
from September 2010**

Contract No. CON03/0809

Final Report

research | consultancy | training

Public Consultation on Estyn's Proposed Changes to the Inspection of Education and Training in Wales from September 2010

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22nd April 2009

Executive Summary

- i. This report presents the results from the public consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the way education and training providers in Wales are inspected. Feedback from the public consultation will be used to design a new inspection framework which will be implemented in 2010.
- ii. The consultation builds on an earlier informal consultation about what the public and teaching profession want from inspection and ran from January 14th to April 7th 2009.
- iii. Considerable effort went into encouraging a wide response through the use of personalised letters and emails to potential respondents, e-bulletins, letters and advertising on sites used by those with an interest in education and press advertisements throughout Wales. There was a choice of response formats – electronic or printed questionnaire, letter or telephone interview. Similarly the consultation document and questions were made available in printed and electronic format.
- iv. A total of 280 responses were received, although not all respondents answered every question. One third of all responses were submitted on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a school; professional body or local authority). All of the sectors that Estyn inspects are represented in the responses received.
- v. The consultation document grouped Estyn's proposals under 7 headings:
 - More **proportionate** inspection
 - A **streamlined framework** of inspection indicators and grades
 - Greater emphasis on the user
 - Extension of the use of **HMI-led inspection** teams with strong '**peer inspector**' involvement
 - More emphasis on building capacity for **self-evaluation** and improvement
 - **Clearer**, more accessible **reports**
 - Shorter period of notice.
- vi. Figure A, below, shows the proportion of responses stating agree or strongly agree with each of the 22 consultation questions, grouped under the seven headings.

- vii. Comments indicated that more **proportionate inspections** would be welcome and offered a better use of limited resources which could be focused on giving support to under-performing schools or other provider.
- viii. While a **streamlined approach** to inspection was welcomed in that it allowed organisations to focus on improvement rather than the inspection process there were some reservation about the use of a four point numerical scoring system as the gap between “outstanding” and “good” was felt by some to be too big. Similarly, while the inclusion of learner well-being and a clearer focus on customers was welcomed, there were reservations about how these might be measured given the subjective nature of the concept.
- ix. A **greater emphasis on the user** was to be welcomed and many felt that having a first hand insight into the learning experience would offer a significant improvement. Again there were some reservations about how this process would be implemented.
- x. **HMI-led inspection** with strong ‘**peer inspector**’ involvement was widely thought likely to bring about fairness, consistency and professionalism to the whole process – as well as improving confidence and impact of inspections. There were some caveats about how the ‘peer inspectors’ would be recruited, trained and rewarded and some helpful suggestions about how the learning from ‘peer inspectors’ might be more widely shared within and between sectors.
- xi. Building capacity for **self-evaluation and improvement** received strong support and was seen as recognition that improvement was a continuous process best looked after by those seeking it. It was felt that there would need to be a structured approach to self-assessment and that there needed to be clear links to the SEF model.
- xii. **Shorter, clearer reports** were considered to be very desirable as it was felt that the current reporting style had become jargon laden and incomprehensible to many – including parents. There was less certainty about collapsing the current seven questions into three – ‘outcomes’, ‘provision’, and ‘leadership and management’. Focusing on the most important issues only was felt likely to make reports more accessible.
- xiii. **Shorter periods of notice were** supported by just over half of respondents and comments indicated that the pros and cons were fairly evenly matched. Less effort devoted to the process was good but the chance of either missing something important or not capturing the whole essence of a school’s performance was seen as a significant risk.

Figure A:

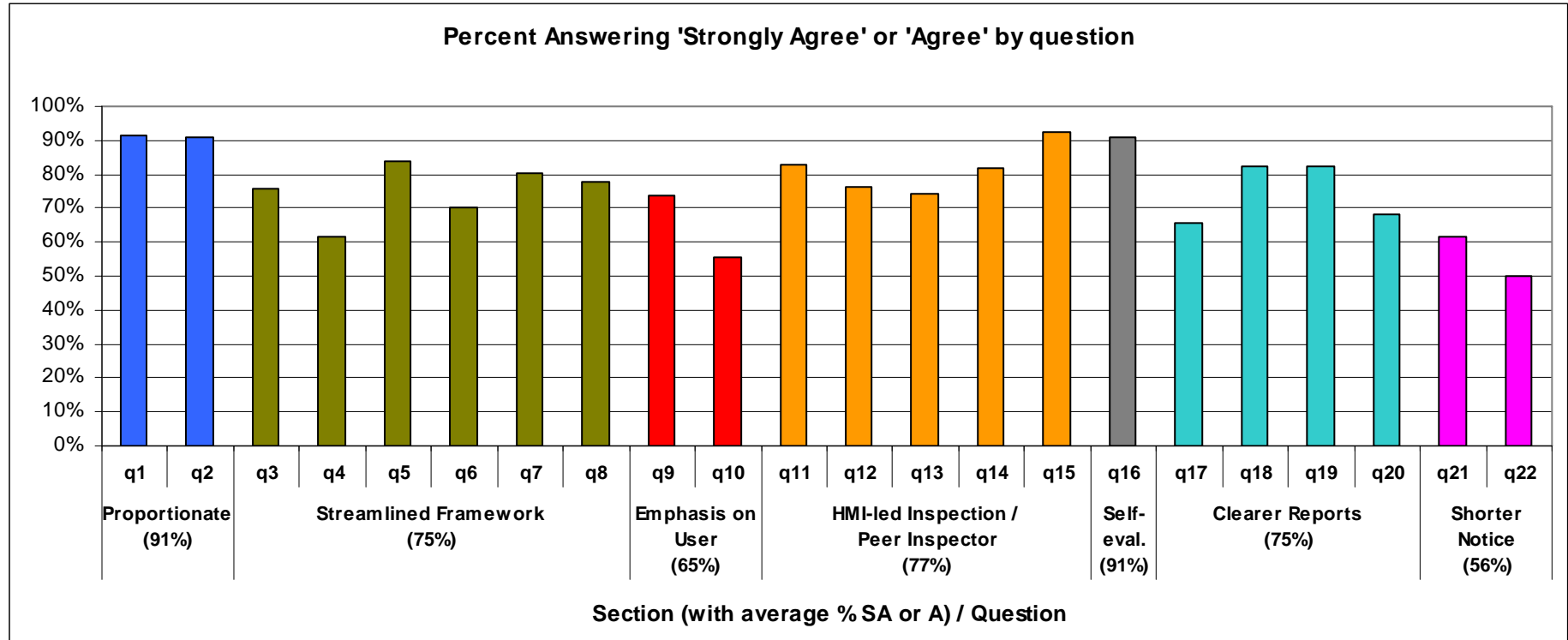


Table of Contents

Tables & Figures

Glossary

1. Introduction	1
2. Respondent Profile.....	3
3. More proportionate inspection.....	6
4. A streamlined framework of inspection indicators and grades.....	11
5. Greater emphasis on the user.....	22
6. Extension of the use of HMI-led inspection teams with strong 'peer inspector' involvement	26
7. More emphasis on building capacity for self evaluation and improvement	35
8. Clearer, more accessible reports	37
9. Shorter period of notice.....	44

Tables & Figures

Tables

Table 1: Number of Responses	3
Table 2: Response by Sector.....	4
Table 3: Total Number of Individual and Organisational Responses	5

Figures

Figure 1	6
Figure 2.....	9
Figure 3.....	11
Figure 4.....	13
Figure 5.....	15
Figure 6.....	16
Figure 7.....	18
Figure 8.....	20
Figure 9.....	22
Figure 10.....	24
Figure 11.....	26
Figure 12.....	28
Figure 13.....	29
Figure 14.....	31
Figure 15.....	33
Figure 16.....	35
Figure 17.....	37
Figure 18.....	39
Figure 19.....	41
Figure 20.....	44
Figure 21.....	46

Glossary

ACL	Adult Community-based Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
FE	Further Education
GTCW	General Teaching Council for Wales
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WBL	Work Based Learning

Explanation of words and phrases

nearly all	with very few exceptions
most	90% or more
many	70% or more
a majority	over 60%
half/around half	close to 50%
a minority	below 40%
few	below 20%
very few	less than 10%

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the results from the public consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the way education and training providers in Wales are inspected. Feedback from the public consultation will be used to design a new inspection framework which will be implemented in 2010.

Background

- 1.2 Estyn has already carried out the first phase of an informal consultation. This second phase of the consultation process will provide feedback to Estyn as they finalise these proposals which aim to ensure that learners are at the heart of inspection in Wales.
- 1.3 Estyn's consultation has been launched whilst the Welsh Assembly Government are consulting on a broader policy statement on Inspection, Audit, and Regulation in Wales. Estyn's new inspection framework is designed to fit coherently with this wider policy, thereby helping to deliver a more joined-up approach across the different sectors of Welsh public services.

Method

- 1.4 The general public and anyone involved in the Welsh education and training system have been encouraged to take part. Promotional activities have included:
- Direct emails and letters to all available sector contacts
 - Direct emails and letters to available contacts who contributed to the Phase 1 Consultation
 - E-bulletins and letters sent on our behalf by professional representative bodies, including:
 - National Day Nursery Association (Wales)
 - National Training Federation Wales (NTFW)
 - Fforwm
 - Independent Schools Council (ISC)
 - Council for Wales Youth Voluntary Services (CWYVS)
 - Dysg
 - Youth Work Strategy Branch (YSB)
 - National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT)
 - General Teaching Council for Wales (GTC)
 - Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

–Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)

–Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

–Young Farmers Clubs (YFC)

–Funky Dragon.

- Website adverts (e.g. Funky Dragon¹, Learning and Skills Observatory Wales, CWYVS², Estyn)
- Advertisements in education and training press (e.g. TES Cymru).

1.5 A consultation document which covered 7 areas through 22 questions was prepared by Estyn and made widely available to the public via promotional activities set out above.

1.6 Responses were both quantitative (on a 5-point scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and qualitative by way of open comment.

1.7 The consultation was launched on the 14th January 2009 and closed on the 7th April 2009. The proposals and the questionnaire can be found on the Estyn website, or, alternatively, hard-copies are available from CRG Research Ltd.

Report structure

1.8 The findings presented here have been reported against the following headings:

- More proportionate inspection
- A streamlined framework of inspection indicators and grades
- Greater emphasis on the user
- Extension of the use of HMI-led inspection teams with strong 'peer inspector' involvement
- More emphasis on building capacity for self-evaluation and improvement
- Clearer, more accessible reports
- Shorter period of notice.

¹ See <http://www.funkydragon.org/en/fe/page.asp?n1=399&n2=2085>

² See <http://www.cwvys.org.uk/en/content/cms/News/News.aspx>

2. Respondent Profile

2.2 Table 1 below shows the number of responses to the consultation in English and Welsh, fully or partially completed.

Table 1: Number of Responses

		Count	% (Completion)	% (Language)
English	Fully Completed	230	86%	
	Partially Completed	37	14%	
	Total English	267		95%
Welsh	Fully Completed	10	77%	
	Partially Completed	3	23%	
	Total Welsh	13		5%
Total	Fully Completed	240	86%	
	Partially Completed	40	14%	
	Total	280		

2.3 Additionally, there were 336 'invalid' responses submitted, where the questionnaire had been viewed online, and in some cases personal details entered but no responses to questions submitted.

2.4 Prior to the consultation questions respondents were asked to indicate whether they had worked in one or more of the sectors Estyn inspects. Responses have been received across all sectors that Estyn inspects, as follows:

Table 2: Response by Sector

Sector	Count	% of Total
Primary schools	90	32%
Secondary schools	87	31%
Local authorities	54	19%
Further education	41	15%
Adult / community-based learning	27	10%
Youth support services	20	7%
Work-based learning	18	6%
Teacher education and training	18	6%
Special schools	13	5%
Nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities	13	5%
Careers companies	6	2%
Youth and community work training	5	2%
Independent schools	4	1%
Pupil referral units	4	1%
Offender learning	1	0%

Note: multiple response question - percentages do not add up to 100%
n=280

- 2.5 Respondents were also asked whether their response represented that of an organisation. Organisation responses have been received from a range of types of organisation, including some with only minor involvement with Estyn activity, and many from schools.

Table 3: Total Number of Individual and Organisational Responses³

	Fully Completed	Partially Completed	Total	%
Organisation Response	80	11	91	33%
Individual response	155	26	181	65%
Unknown	5	3	8	3%
Total	240	40	280	100%

- 2.6 Most of the responses have been received electronically via Bristol Online Surveys. A number of responses in hard copy and via other electronic formats have been returned.

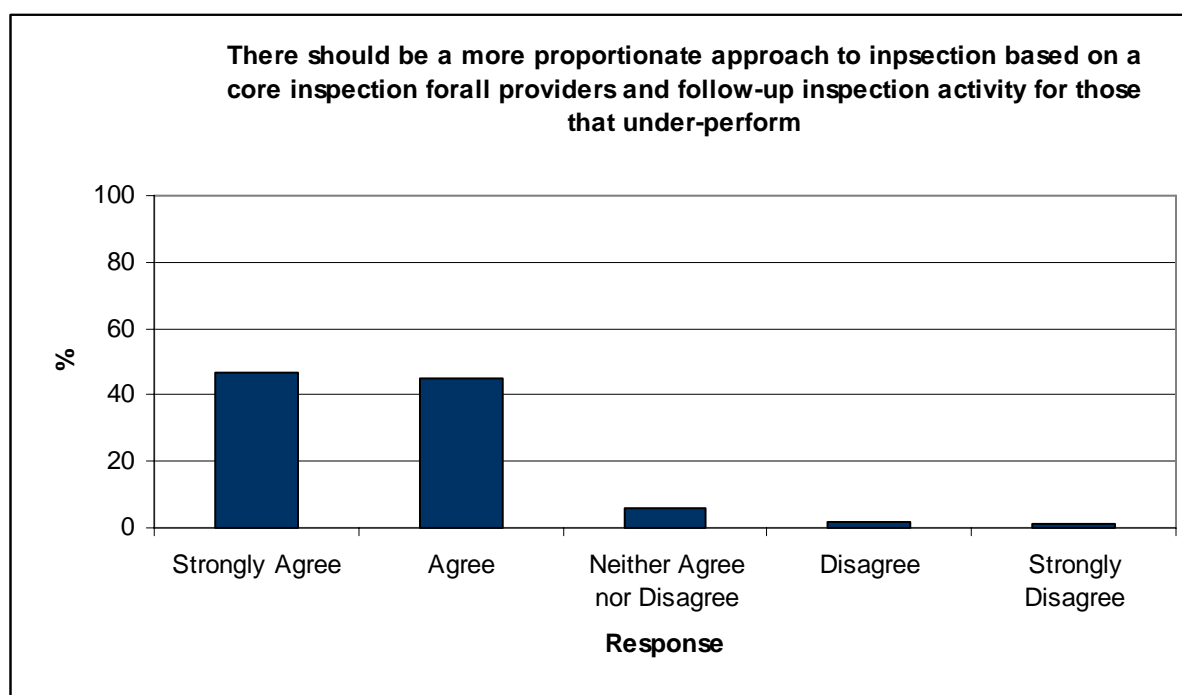
³ Some responses had missing values

3. More proportionate inspection

- 3.1 Estyn propose to introduce substantially shorter or 'core' inspections for all providers, which are complemented by enhanced levels of 'follow-up' inspection activity targeted on those providers who have been found, through their core inspection, to be under-performing.

Question 1: There should be a more proportionate approach to inspection based on a core inspection for all providers and follow-up inspection activity for those that under-perform

- 3.2 The proposal to introduce a more proportionate approach to inspection was widely welcomed, with 92% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. Only 3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A further 5% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.



[n=273]

Figure 1

- 3.3 A proportionate inspection model based on a core inspection, and follow-up inspection for those under-performing proved very popular with respondents. The approach was felt to offer a more effective use of limited resources, allowing greater time to be spent with those providers most in need of support. The approach was also seen as more sensible and fair, allowing inspections to be tailored to the needs and circumstances of individual providers. Two respondents applauded the use of an inspection model which was proportionate to risk, with one emphasising that there

was a substantial amount of information available to inform effective risk analysis, and to select which providers can have inspection deferred.

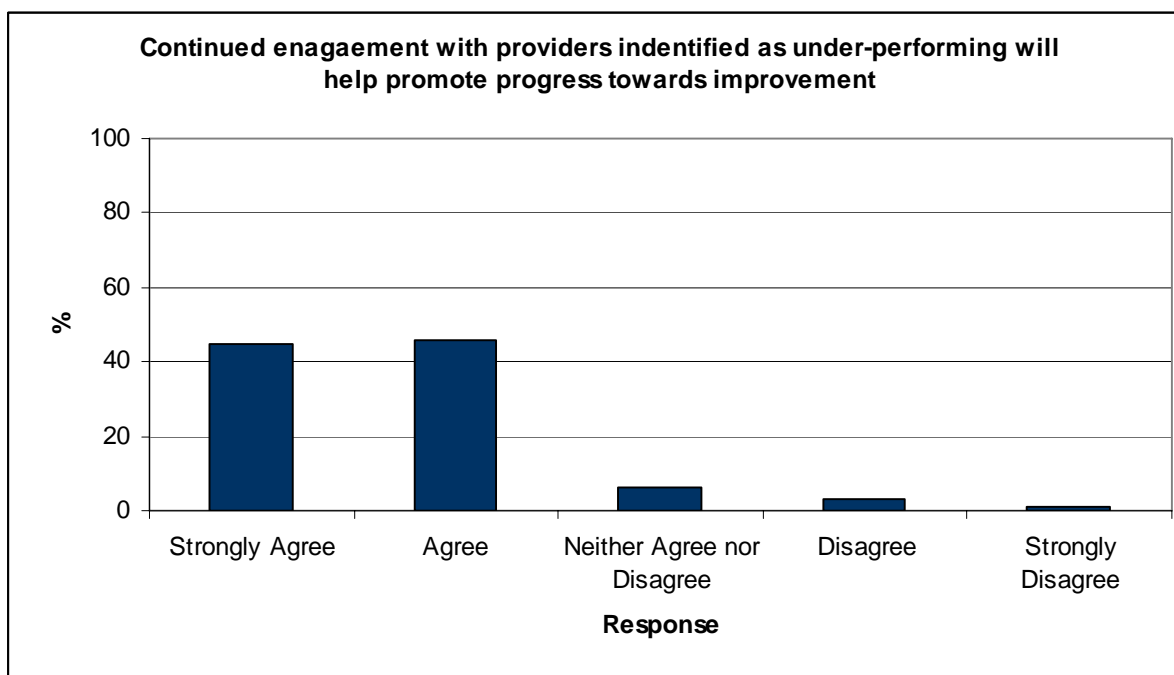
- 3.4 A lighter touch approach was welcomed for those providers that perform consistently well. Offering under-performing providers' greater follow-up inspection activity and support was also popular. Using follow-up activity as a positive development tool was a common theme for respondents. One respondent stated that they particularly welcomed follow-up activity for those areas underperforming as it was "*more realistic than waiting 6 years to see whether the issues had been addressed*". A range of other positive comments were listed that followed similar themes linked to efficiency and the value of focussing support on providers in most need.
- 3.5 Despite the general support for this measure, a few respondents did raise some qualifications for consideration. For example, one respondent commented that follow-up activity should include the LEA link officer, whilst another argued that "*follow up activity should have large elements of advice and support and not just be a judgemental review*". There was also a concern expressed by one respondent who felt that whilst the system would work where under-performance was recognised, that there was a risk that "*some institutions may be able to slip through the net in a shortened inspection*". Another stressed the need to ensure that core inspections were sufficiently rigorous to detect under inspections in key areas. A further response emphasised the potential for using inspection to identify effective best practice and disseminate across all sectors for the benefit of children and young people.
- 3.6 Several of the comments given to qualify support for this statement, called for more detail on particular aspects of the proposals. In some cases the submissions included a range of specific technical queries that will need greater individual consideration. Other qualifications focussed on more specific points. For example one respondent felt the details on follow-up activities were vague and that providers needed sufficient time to action changes. Indeed the time lapse between core inspection and follow-up activities was another area where respondents requested additional information. Two respondents sought greater clarity on how the proposals would be applied to Partnership – "*would follow up activity apply to all or only the underperforming providers?*"
- 3.7 Of the very few respondents that offered more critical comments, a series of individual points were raised. One respondent expressed the view that they were not convinced Local Authorities were best placed to manage improvement in schools that under-perform. Another respondent who strongly disagreed argued that there should be a "*... well qualified and sector-experienced inspector linked to a group of schools. This sector should have any-time access to these schools*".
- 3.8 One sectoral organisation called for a change to the inspection approach, stating that "*an annual thematic consultative approach across the whole sector would*

corroborate a consistency of service and provide more opportunity to share good practice as well as support improvement where needed”.

- 3.9 Three respondents also focussed on the issue of how the proposed arrangements intended to extend a form of follow-up to an additional 25% of providers. One respondents questioned how the 25% figure had been arrived at before inspections has been carried out, commenting *“what is the definition of needing support”*. Two other respondents expressed concern that the 25% figure would lead to unhelpful and inaccurate media headlines about a quarter of Welsh schools being in some way unsatisfactory.
- 3.10 Three respondents required further discussions on how this would be achieved in practice citing *“local authorities would welcome sharing of the good practice that Estyn encounters during inspections”*.
- 3.11 The same respondents commented that improvement work is currently underway (e.g. local authorities' school improvement processes, School Effectiveness Framework etc). They felt it is *“essential that any work that Estyn undertakes is aligned with these existing and developing processes”*.
- 3.12 Another respondent believed the features of any future system of inspection should be seen as part of a holistic approach to quality improvement ensuring there is no increase in workload for individual teachers and schools. The response focused on the effective use of self-evaluation outcomes to minimise unnecessary inspection activity and the inspection process acting as a prompt for additional support to be provided to a school or LEA where self assessment has not already triggered such action.

Question 2: Continued engagement with providers identified as under-performing will help promote progress towards improvement

3.13 The proposal to continue engagement with under-performing providers was widely supported, with 91% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing. Only 4% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. A further 5% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.



[n=270]

Figure 2

3.14 The majority of comments offered by respondents were supportive in nature, stating that the new approach offered a more developmental model, better geared towards resolving problems, disseminating best practice and supporting progress towards improvement.

3.15 The emphasis on under-performing schools was seen as a sensible approach, representing a far more effective use of resources. Also, the commitment to work with under-performing schools on a follow-up basis was identified as being a far better way of achieving sustainable change and improvement. For example, one respondent commented *“Ongoing encouragement and support is more likely to bring about change than a brief visit and then being left to sort things out alone”*. Another noted that a common criticism of the current inspection process was that it had not always supported schools to bring about necessary changes. One respondent echoed calls for strong engagement, quoting the benefit gained from a recent Estyn inspection, where the dialogue between both parties *“was invaluable”*.

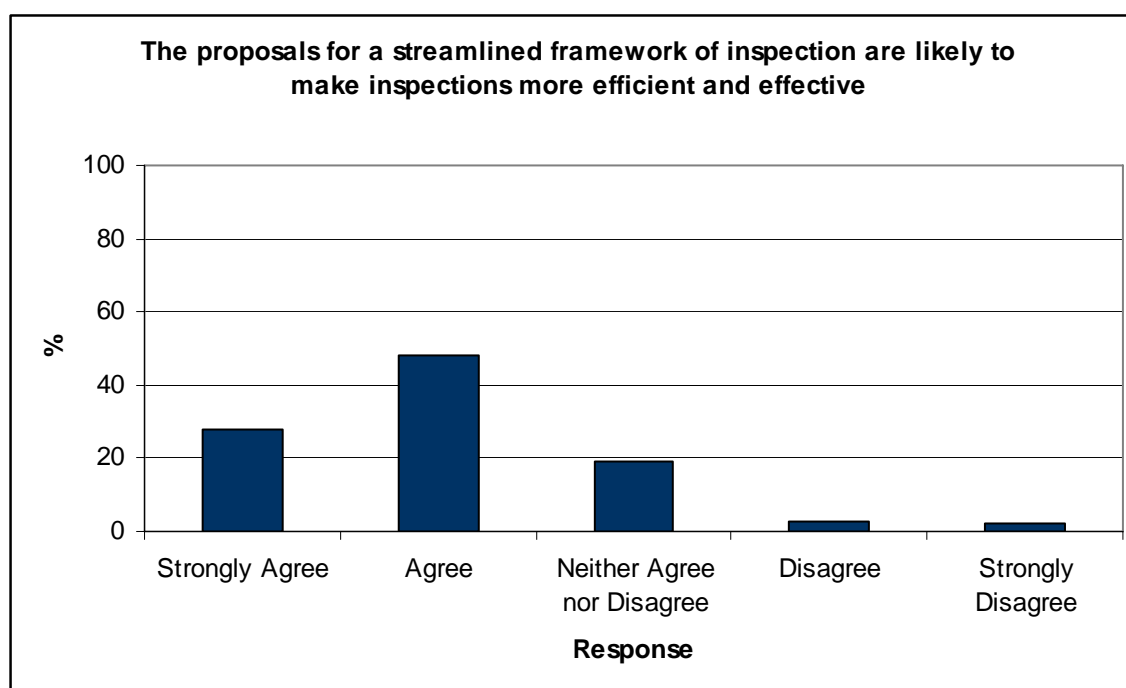
- 3.16 Whilst most respondents were supportive of the proposal, there were a few that stressed the need for the follow-up engagement to be constructive in nature, as opposed to being critical or punitive. One respondent recommended that the engagement needed to be more hands on and supportive, whilst another stressed that *"Engagement must be based upon partnership, support advice and guidance"*. These cautionary statements, whilst supportive, emphasised the need to avoid a punitive regime, for example *"Engagement should focus on the way forward and not used as a stick to beat providers with"*, and *"It depends on the nature and quality of engagement. Will it be supportive and enabling (critical friend) or threatening and critical?"*
- 3.17 A range of other qualifying statements were provided by respondents who otherwise supported the proposal. One respondent stated that self assessment and maturity matrices were not the best way to assess progress and that whilst peer assessment would be better, *"it needs to be treated with caution"*. Two separate organisations highlighted the need for the inspection regime to be fully cognisant of matters affecting the achievement of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those learners of English as an additional language.
- 3.18 Three respondents mentioned the potential for Estyn to be more active in disseminating good practice and offering advice to schools. One respondent commented *"Estyn should have the power to advise as well as judge and to recommend an action plan which will help the school improve"*. Three other respondents stressed the importance of having continuity in the inspection team between core inspection and follow-up stages. One respondent stated that they would *"... welcome further clarification on who would measure progress towards improvement – the LEA, Estyn, the SEF Partner?"*
- 3.19 Very few critical points were raised by the respondents. One such comment focussed on the form and quality of inspection, noting *"If this is HMI led it at least it offers some consistency. I am less convinced if it is led by tendered Registered Inspectors, as in my experience these are variable in quality"*. Another comment called for positive approach to inspection, stating *"I would prefer a more productive model of support rather than the punishment 'special measure' type of action"*. One respondent, whilst recognising the potential of the approach, expressed their concern that the follow-up activity might lead to increased workloads for teachers in the schools concerned.

4. A streamlined framework of inspection indicators and grades

- 4.1 Estyn aim to simplify the way they inspect. Estyn propose to simplify the criteria used to make inspection judgements and the grading system. It is proposed that the new inspection framework will focus clearly on giving Estyn the information it needs to target support where it is needed most.

Question 3: The proposals for a streamlined framework of inspection are likely to make inspections more efficient and effective

- 4.2 Overall, the proposal was widely supported with 76% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that the proposals for a streamlined framework of inspection are likely to make inspections more efficient and effective.



[n=253]

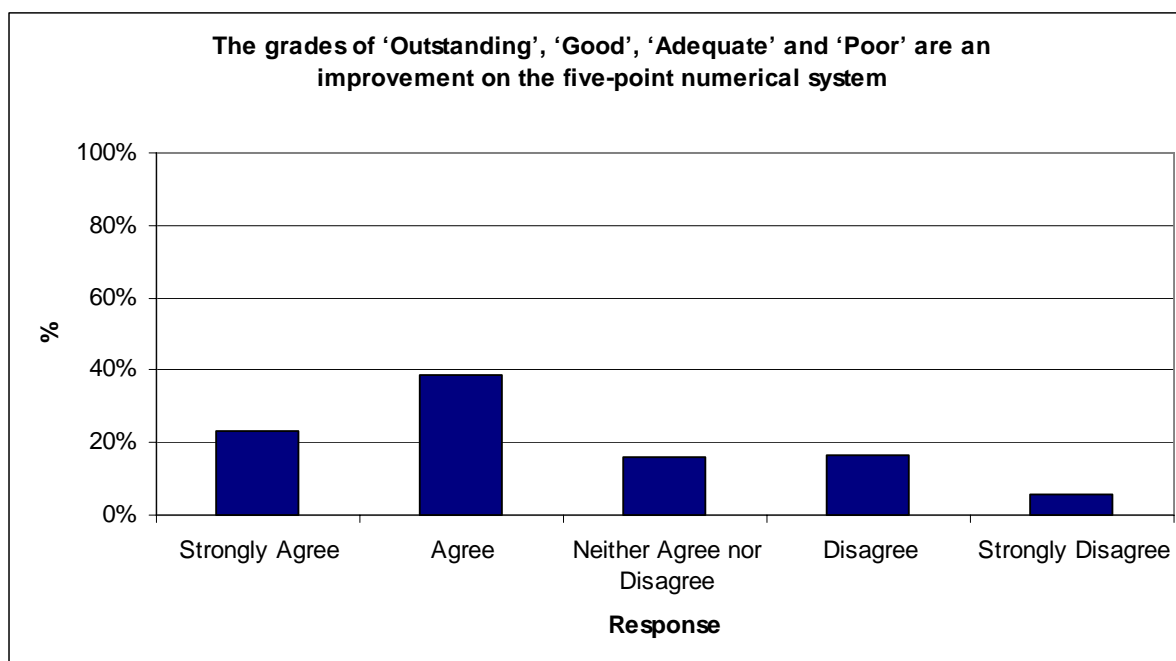
Figure 3

- 4.3 Those who agreed focused on its advantages in terms of a shorter lead time for inspections. A shortening of timescales relating to the inspection process would potentially allow inspectors to gain a more honest picture of 'school-life'. However, two respondents felt there *"would need to be a full understanding of the new process at local level in order to minimise stress"*.

- 4.4 A more-focused approach to inspection was also welcomed. This would benefit schools in a number of ways:
- Enable them to focus on the most important aspects of education
 - Less time wasted on schools preparing for inspections and more time spent on school improvement
 - Avoid investing more time than necessary in inspecting effective providers with more time given to those schools clearly under-performing.
- 4.5 However, a very few respondents were cautious about this approach emphasising the need to ensure inspections are not too focused. Focused inspections could potentially lead to inefficiencies with insufficient and irrelevant feedback given to schools to improve learning delivery.
- 4.6 Although there was strong agreement between respondents that a streamlined approach was required, certain organisations were unclear as to how the new methodology is more streamlined than the previous. Respondents questioned certain aspects of the methodology such as choosing *“six subjects in a standard inspection instead of an OfSTED section 4 type inspections”* and adding 3 further judgements/evaluations on literacy, numeracy and Welsh language on top of the 15 grades already used.
- 4.7 A reduction in content for the core inspections was welcomed but there was concern as to how the process was going to reflect additional aims (e.g. Aims for Children, which look much further than just learning).
- 4.8 A very few respondents required greater clarification on how the inspection framework is to be aligned with both the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) and Quality and Effectiveness Framework (QEF).
- 4.9 Respondents were also concerned about the new arrangements leading to greater emphasis on the judgement of inspectors and effective self-evaluation by providers, requiring robust procedures to be in place.
- 4.10 One respondent expressed concerns about the proposed framework featuring a specific reference to the use of the Welsh language and achievements in bilingualism. It commented that there is no contractual requirement on teachers working in English medium schools (other than those engaged in the delivery of Welsh) to use the Welsh language. The use of Welsh language and achievements in bi-lingualism should have no bearing on the overall outcome on an English medium school.

Question 4: The grades of 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Adequate' and 'Poor' are an improvement on the five-point numerical system

4.11 62% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal. Those respondents who submitted a written response were complimentary about the terminology and four-point scale.



[n=249]

Figure 4

4.12 The 22% of respondents who either strongly disagreed or disagreed expressed common concerns. A concern was the large gap between the terms 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. It was suggested that the term 'Very Good' needed to be included as a school may "often be very good but not outstanding", which the grades do not reflect. A few also disagreed with the term 'Outstanding', suggesting it be replaced by 'Excellent'.

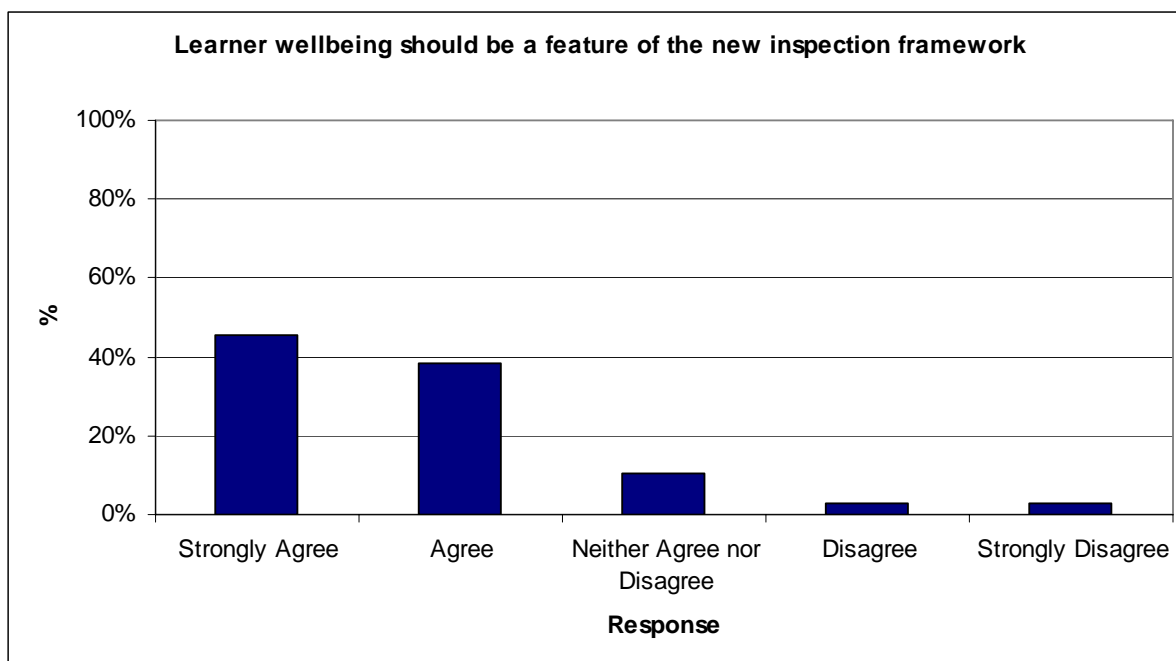
4.13 Responses show the terminology used for grades is subjective with positive comments ranging from "will be easier for the public to understand" to "better, more meaningful descriptors".

4.14 However, a minority of responses analysed questioned the appropriateness of 'Adequate' as a grade, believing it to be negative and ambiguous. A few of these respondents recommended replacing the grade 'Adequate' with 'Satisfactory'.

- 4.15 This was supported by a respondent who pointed towards evidence of the four-point scale adopted by Ofsted suggesting *“this system is understood by users, though there has been debate about whether ‘Satisfactory’ is a better term than ‘Adequate’”*.
- 4.16 A few respondents also wanted clear and robust definitions of each grade to ensure there is consistency both within and across sectors and allow users to *“know exactly what they mean”* and the *“expected performance required for each grade”*. One respondent emphasised the need for these grades to be criterion-referenced, rather than norm-referenced in order to provide greater objectivity.
- 4.17 Very few respondents commented on grades being unhelpful in assessing the performance of a school as many users only look at the grade and not the supporting narrative. One respondent felt Estyn needed to *“consider alternative approaches to those that allow the outcomes of inspection of complex organisations, processes and relationships to be represented by some organisations as little more than seven numerical values for the seven Key Questions”*.
- 4.18 A common theme running through the responses is the *“need to realise what is most important is the accuracy and credibility of the judgements, rather than their mode of expression”*.

Question 5: Learner wellbeing should be a feature of the new inspection framework

4.19 An important new feature of the proposed inspection framework is the inclusion of learner wellbeing as a reporting feature. There was strong support for its inclusion with 84% of all respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing.



[n=254]

Figure 5

4.20 A minority of respondents questioned the meaning of the term wellbeing. These required a clear definition of wellbeing, capable of being applied to all sectors of learning to ensure a consistent approach.

4.21 A few respondents asked how the term wellbeing was to be measured and standardised. They were conscious that the term is not explicit and will require well defined outcomes to ensure wellbeing is measured effectively and fairly.

4.22 Very few respondents questioned how the views of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds (whose second language is English) on learner wellbeing will be gathered. It is important to ensure the views of minority groups are incorporated with the intention of measuring the wellbeing of individuals in these under-represented groups.

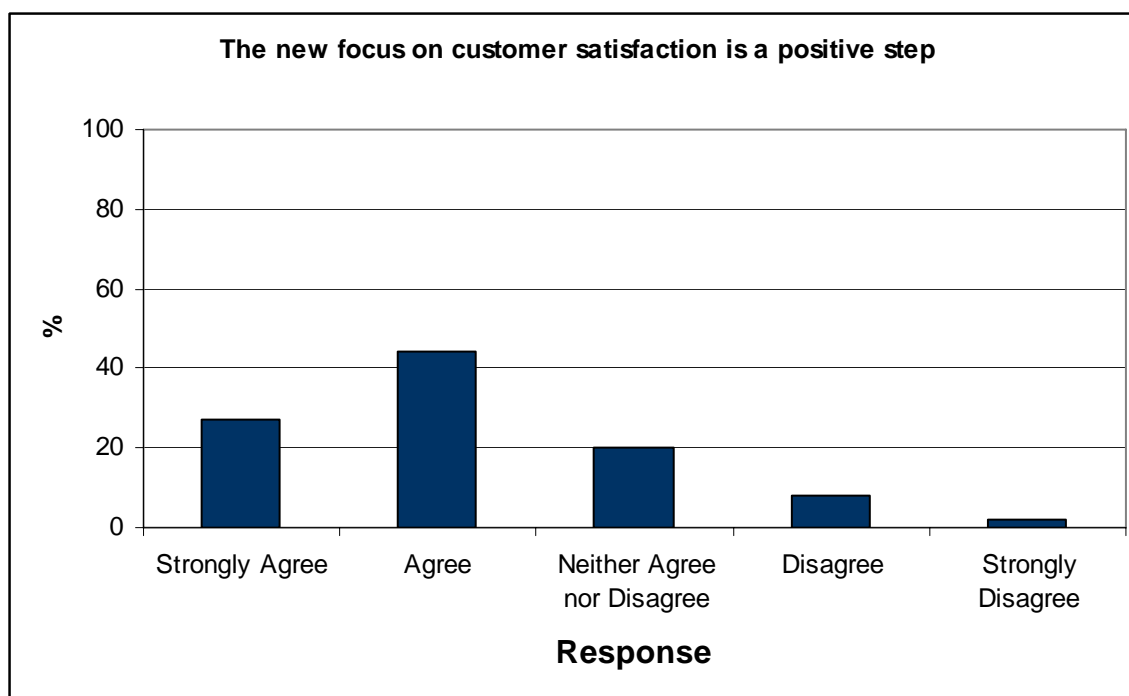
4.23 Very few also commented on certain areas of wellbeing lying outside the influence of schools. One respondent mentioned current work being undertaken by the Welsh

Assembly Government in partnership with local government and the not for profit sector to examine this issue. They felt this work “should include Estyn if wellbeing is going to be reported on via the inspection framework”.

- 4.24 One respondent commented that schools must also address “*learner wellbeing beyond the school gates with inspections seeking evidence of the school's impact within the wider community*”. Another felt the concept of wellbeing needs to be “*viewed in the context of the realities of the learning environment and the socioeconomic mix of the wider community*”.
- 4.25 Another respondent wanted to ensure that the term ‘wellbeing’ encompassed all individuals in the learner setting with the new inspection framework including teachers and headteachers’ wellbeing. One respondent emphasised the requirement for the learner wellbeing element of school inspections to measure the wellbeing of children with disabilities.

Question 6: The new focus on customer satisfaction is a positive step

- 4.26 There was general agreement that this was a positive step with 71% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. A few (10%) answered negatively.



[n=249]
Figure 6

- 4.27 The discussion around this question centred on plans to “include learners much more in the inspection process”, possibly through use of questionnaires and focus groups

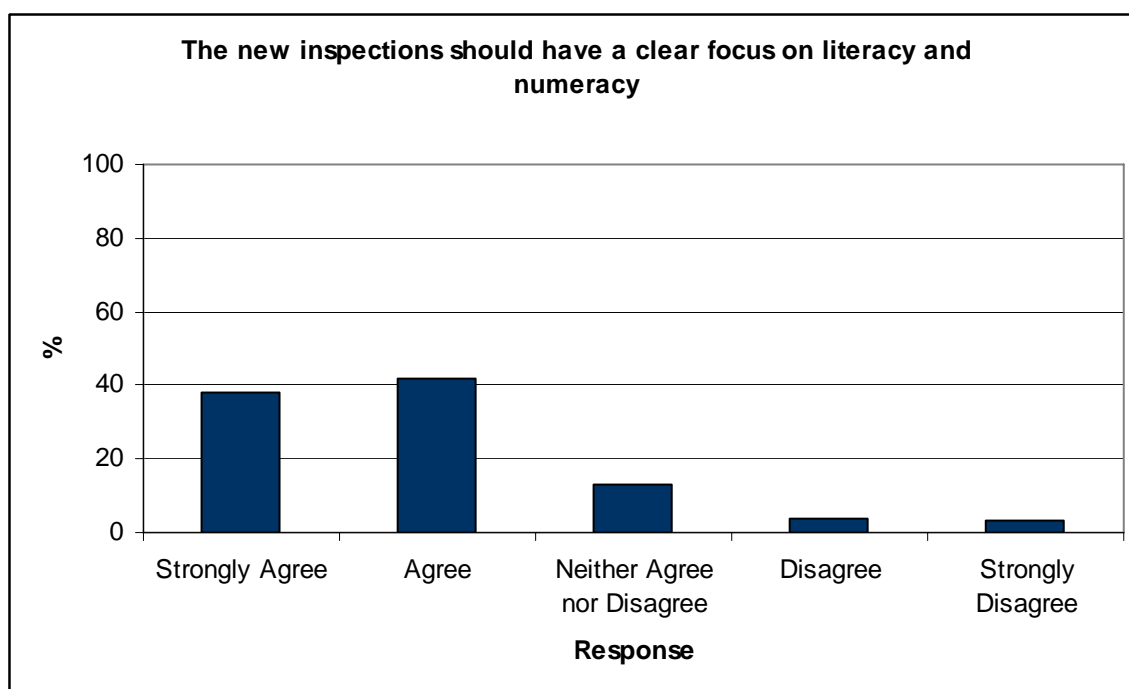
to gather views during the course of inspection. Parents might also be included where appropriate.

- 4.28 Some comment was made surrounding the use and definition of the term 'customer'. A few were not in agreement with the usage due to its implications of equating a school to a commercial environment, while often nevertheless agreeing with the actual initiative. There was potential to focus on satisfaction beyond learners and parents, for example incorporating the views of school governors and staff, LEAs, employers. In light of this the precise definition of 'customer' in any context should always be made clear.
- 4.29 Positive comments reflected agreement that high levels of customer satisfaction are an ultimate measure of things being done right, and therefore should be actively sought, although a need for proportionality was also mentioned, i.e. that customer focus should not be an over-riding feature that detracts from more solid evidence. Involvement of parent questionnaires in determining when inspections took place as well as how was a possibility.
- 4.30 A potential issue highlighted was that customer feedback might be dominated by a 'vocal minority' whose views do not reflect the wider student or parent body, or even that whole groups of customers might have views that are uninformed or counter-productive (e.g. level of maturity of pupils, or that they might be 'coached'), and that these possibilities would need to be contextualised and accounted for in analysing results. Clear identification and indication of the majority opinion on any particular issue was a suggested solution. A particular issue for the Adult and Community Learning sector is that many learners drop out of courses early, so those that remain at the time of inspection might not represent the full customer base. Customer feedback on how they felt their views had been taken into account was a suggested option for monitoring the process.
- 4.31 Similarly, the question was asked of how customer satisfaction will be measured, i.e. wording of questions and discussion topics in consulting customers, and how results are to be reported. The importance of making provision to allow all types of customers (e.g. children with disabilities) to communicate their views was highlighted, and that methods should be clear and easy to understand for all, though not overly simplistic.
- 4.32 Some concern was raised regarding how hard-to-reach groups would be consulted, such as people from ethnic minority backgrounds and those whose first language is not English or Welsh, and how any localised additional costs (e.g. translation) would be met.
- 4.33 In some cases, there was seen to be existing infrastructure for collecting customer views that should be taken into account and possibly evaluated prior to implementing

any new arrangements, particularly in the Adult and Community Learning sector. The possible burden on learners of being over-surveyed by both existing systems and any new questionnaires was also mentioned.

Question 7: The new inspections should have a clear focus on literacy and numeracy

- 4.34 This proposal met with wide agreement with 80% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 7% responding negatively.



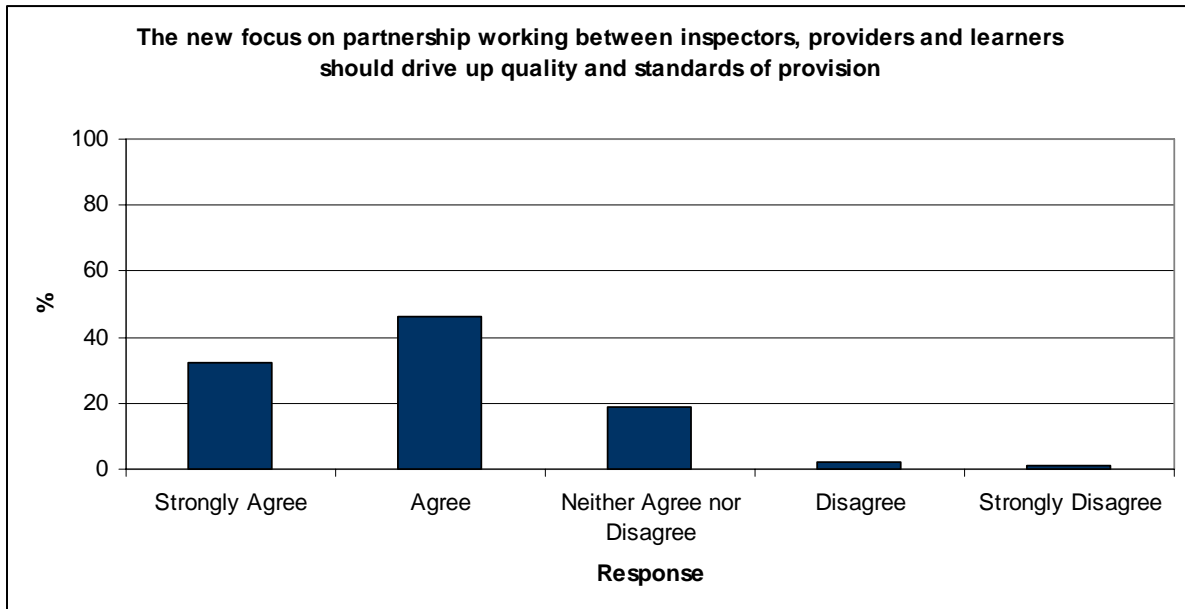
[n=252]
Figure 7

- 4.35 Positive comments stressed the importance of a strong focus on literacy and numeracy standards, including that they are linked to other indicators such as behaviour and attendance, and that they underpin all other skills and are important across all education sectors.
- 4.36 There was, however, a perceived requirement to account for differing needs between sectors, in particular whilst literacy and numeracy might be a clear priority in the nursery and primary sectors, there should be a recognition that some areas of post-16 and Adult and Community have problems which need addressing whereas others don't, and where they do there may be complexities and additional expense in accurate measurement. A strong focus on the problem at school stage where necessary was suggested as the best solution to cases where there is deficiency among young people entering Further Education.

- 4.37 In terms of subject areas, there was some concern that literacy and numeracy skills might be delivered through English and Mathematics only, as opposed to a broader approach reflecting that they underpin all subjects. More detail was sought as to how skills would be taught in practice (whether through all teaching, or specific sessions).
- 4.38 The issue of how to fit ICT skills into the framework was raised by a minority of respondents, with these skills areas being closely related and overlapping. Some suggested the even weighting of ICT with literacy and numeracy. Other subject or development areas that might be neglected by too narrow a focus were also mentioned, particularly by those who disagreed with the proposal (e.g. creative subjects, social skills, basic/key/essential/core skills more widely), and the fit of those who are fluent in Welsh or other languages but may struggle with English could be considered.
- 4.39 Other comments included that key skills should not necessarily be seen as an indicator of high standards (although others saw it as at least a good benchmark to measure improvement), and that there may be teacher training issues to be overcome in rolling out the new approach.
- 4.40 The changing policy context and introduction of 'Essential Skills Wales' and the revised curriculum would need to be taken into account, as would fit with and possible links to other schemes such as the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Employer Pledge, etc. Terminology usage surrounding basic skills would need to be consistent. Children with special needs would also need to be specifically considered.

Question 8: The new focus on partnership working between inspectors, providers and learners should drive up quality and standards of provision

4.41 This proposal met with general agreement with 78% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 3% responding negatively.



[n=250]
Figure 8

4.42 Better partnership working was clearly seen as desirable, and some positive comments centred around which organisations might be able to offer support, including local authorities, awarding bodies and DCELLS; how good practice might be shared between all types of partners; how inspectors might be able to better provide valuable advice to providers as well as inspect, promoting a new culture of trust and respect; and how peer assessors or learners might be appropriately recruited and trained – suitable experience and skills being necessary but without neglecting input from smaller providers with less capacity. Safeguards were seen as potentially required to ensure that all types of inspectors, providers and learners are seen as equal partners, and that children and young people could genuinely participate. The definition and marketing to all stakeholders of the new approach would also be important.

4.43 Continuous self-evaluation by all types of providers was cited as a crucial process to record quality on an ongoing basis, ensure learner feedback is taken on an ongoing basis, and to assist eventual involvement in inspections.

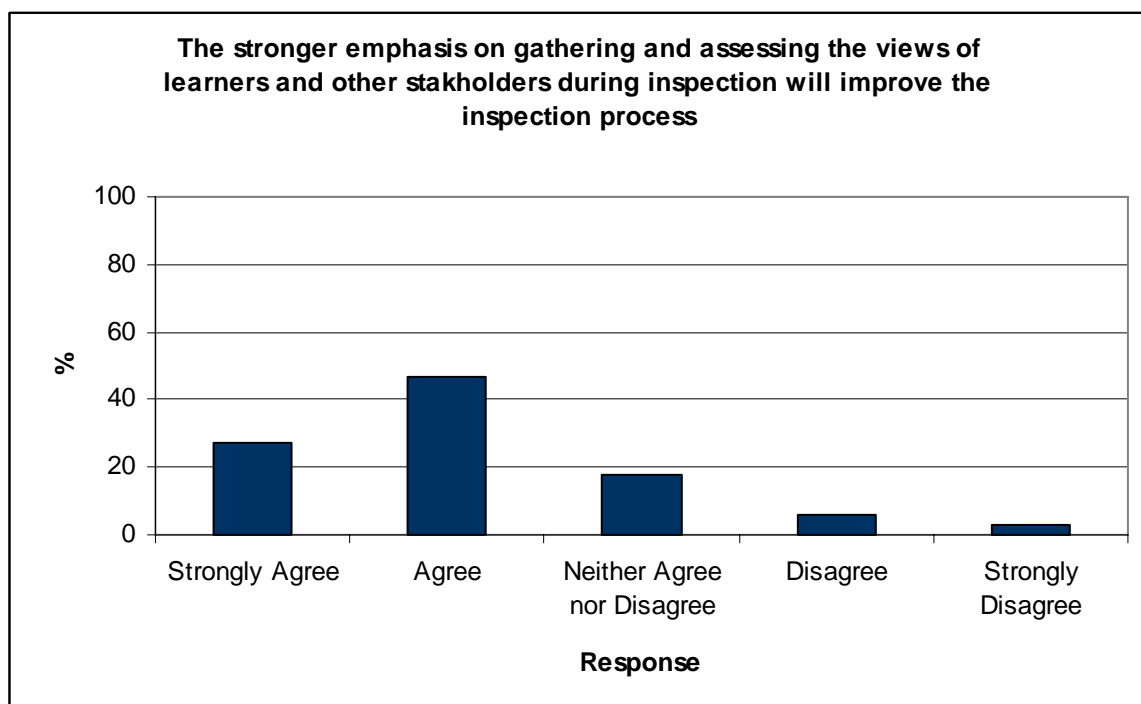
- 4.44 There was some sentiment that partnership working under current and past arrangements is already of a high standard, this was particularly seen in the ACL and FE sectors.
- 4.45 There was some concern that standards should not be compromised in the core role of HMIs, and that their involvement in leading all inspections would remain crucial even with enhanced partnership working. There was also a potential risk seen that inspections might become too involved with policy development at the expense of measuring quality, and that ensuring consistency between different HMIs might be difficult.
- 4.46 The few comments in disagreement with the proposals centred around a need to focus resources directly on improving schools as the only genuine way of raising standards, and that partnership working in itself could not improve standards. The term 'driving up' was criticised by a few respondents, particularly as it implied a need for constant centrally-driven change.

5. Greater emphasis on the user

- 5.1 Current inspections already have a strong focus on the learner, but Estyn want to strengthen this further. Estyn propose that inspections incorporate new ways of gathering and reflecting on stakeholders' views and customer satisfaction.

Question 9: The stronger emphasis on gathering and assessing the views of learners and other stakeholders during inspection will improve the inspection process

- 5.2 Overall, placing greater emphasis on the views of learners and other stakeholders during inspection was largely seen as improving the inspection process, with 74% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. Only 9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal.



[n=238]

Figure 9

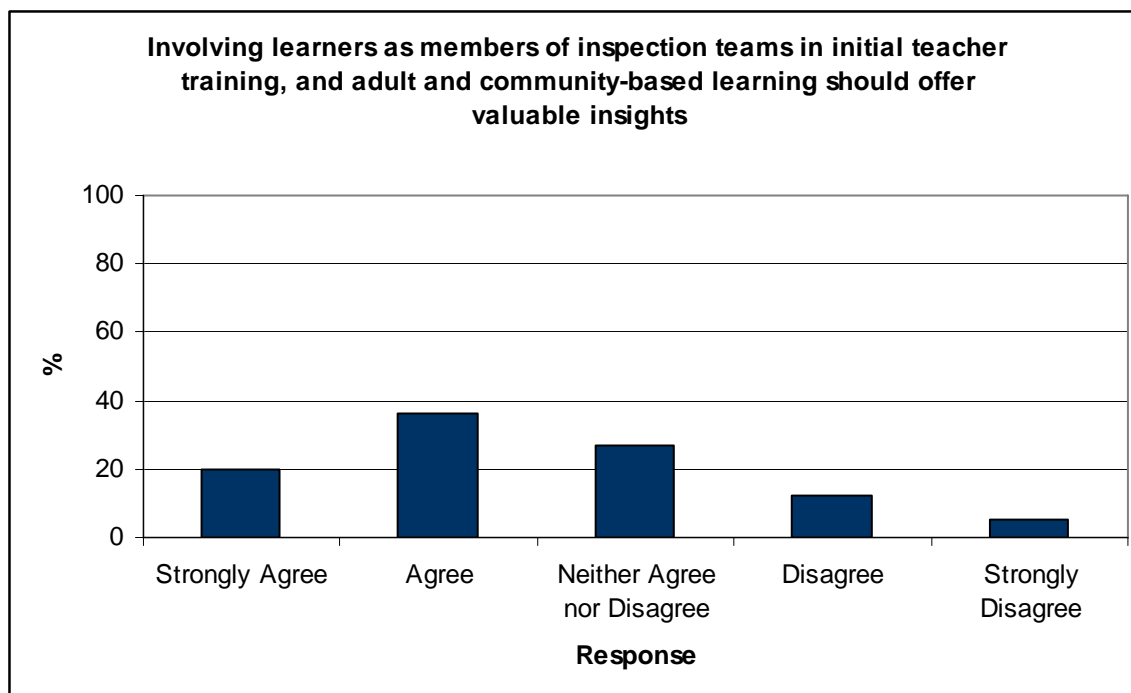
- 5.3 With respect to learners in particular, a number of respondents (encompassing representatives of primary schools, secondary schools, local authorities, colleges, etc.) suggested their ability to offer a first hand insight into the learning experience as 'service users' to be an important focus for inspections.
- 5.4 Support for stronger emphasis on views of learners and others stakeholders did, however, come with some qualifications, primarily related to process issues.

Respondents suggested a need to clarify how data will be collected, ensuring the right questions are asked in a clear, unbiased manner. Furthermore, selection of pupils who are to input into the inspection process is also seen as important in order to ensure views are representative of all learners and are in no way biased. Underpinning all of this, a few respondents, across different teaching sectors, commented that the ability to effectively gather, analyse and make use of data collected from learners and stakeholders is contingent upon the confidence and competence of inspectors.

- 5.5 Concerns were raised by a couple of respondents in relation to gathering views from parents, children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds speaking languages other than English or Welsh: questionnaires would therefore need to be available in a wide range of languages.
- 5.6 A small number of comments were made which suggested an effectively implemented self-evaluation process, incorporating the views of learners on an ongoing basis through, for example, school councils, may reduce the need for learner involvement in formal inspections: in contrast to this however, one respondent suggested *“that it should not be assumed that using in-school communication support is always the best way of getting open feedback from students on their education”* (e.g. concerns over the consequences of adverse, non-confidential feedback for individuals).
- 5.7 Of the limited number of comments received disagreeing with the statement, the main issues appeared to relate to the added value gained from increasing the emphasis on the views of learners and stakeholders: would they be able to offer unbiased opinions (e.g. learners with personal grievances against schools/teachers), and would the balance between this and other aspects of the inspection process (e.g. practitioner input, lesson observations, etc.) be appropriate. Several comments also suggested further clarification is needed when referring to ‘stakeholders’, and how wide-reaching the definition of the term is.

Question 10: Involving learners as members of inspection teams in initial teacher training and adult and community-based learning should offer valuable insights

5.8 Overall, just over half (52%) of respondents considered involving learners as members of inspection teams in initial teacher training and ACL would offer valuable insights: a further 28% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.



[n=237]

Figure 10

5.9 In a similar vein to question 10, many of the respondents supporting the statement and commenting further on the value of involving learners in the inspection process, recognised the valuable insights they can offer: a number of caveats were however attached to responses, with potential issues to be clarified including:

- selecting learners who are representative and can input in an unbiased manner
- providing appropriate training to learners to contribute effectively and add value; and
- ensuring support is in place to help those from minority groups participate.

5.10 Of those respondents who disagreed with the statement, a small number of comments (made by representatives from a large local authority and the ACL and Secondary School sectors) suggested learner views would be collected adequately without the need for their inclusion in inspection teams: effectively gathering the

views of learners (e.g. as per Statement 10) was suggested to preclude the need for learners sitting on inspection teams, particularly in the context of the possible issues raised above.

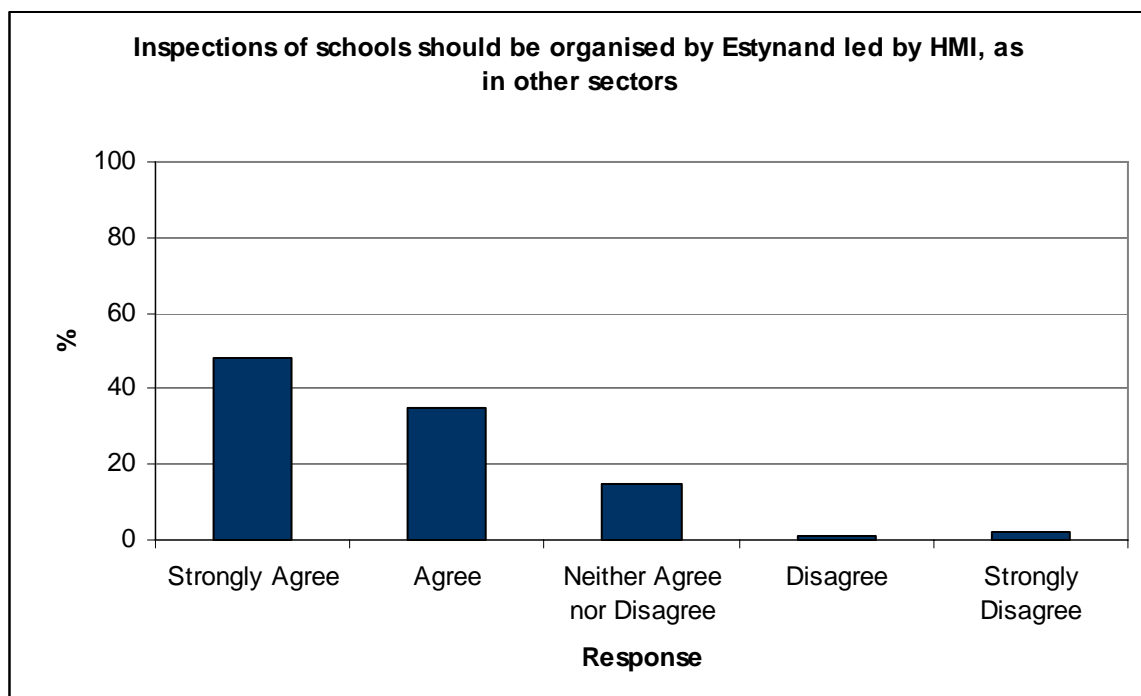
- 5.11 Notwithstanding this, one respondent in particular identified a peripheral benefit to including trainee teachers in inspection teams, commenting that it would have been valuable to have been involved in an inspection whilst going through teacher training, as it would have made the inspection process “*more positive and less daunting when [they] started teaching*”.

6. Extension of the use of HMI-led inspection teams with strong 'peer inspector' involvement

- 6.1 Estyn aim to move, in almost all sectors, towards having inspection teams led by HMI (or in some cases appropriately trained additional inspectors on secondment to Estyn), with many of the other team members being drawn from a pool of currently practising practitioners in the sector, who will train and deploy a small number of times each year as 'peer inspectors'.

Question 11: Inspections of schools should be organised by Estyn and led by HMI, as in other sectors

- 6.2 This proposal met with overwhelming support with 85% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.



[n=237]

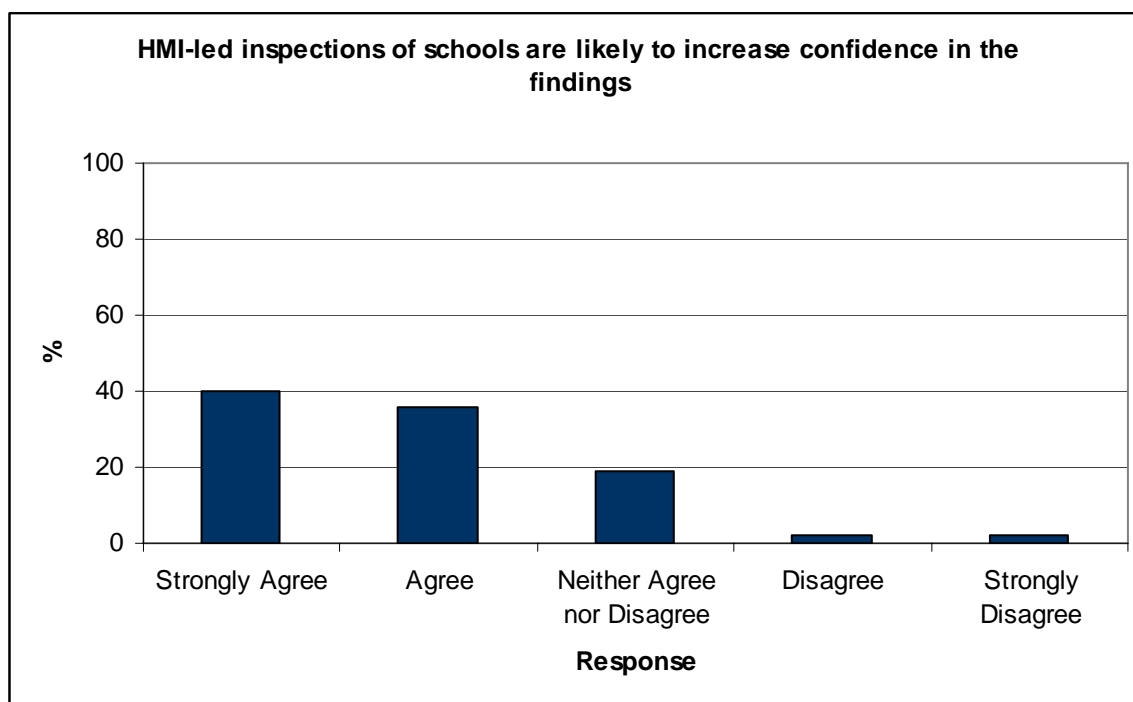
Figure 11

- 6.3 The main focus of the positive comments was that the proposal would bring about fairness, consistency and professionalism to the whole process. One respondent strongly advocated a move away from a multiplicity of private contractors because many are perceived as lacking current school experience. They commented that *“the scope to increase the currency of knowledge underpinning assessments would be dramatically increased”*.

- 6.4 Current arrangements were criticised because there was felt to be unevenness in the application of standards between providers and some contracted inspectors were seen as succumbing to pressure to give a favourable report. Schools, local authorities, work-based learning providers and teachers' organisations were all equally supportive of the proposal. An Estyn-led process was seen as having greater credibility across the board. Adopting the same model in schools as operates in FE was seen not only as fair but essential in the light of the 14-19 agenda.
- 6.5 However, although the comments were mainly positive, there were some reservations about how the proposal was going to be implemented, particularly in respect of recruiting a cadre of HMIs with sufficient recent experience. Several of the larger educational organizations suggested secondment of teachers as one way of bridging the gap between having leadership and authority and the necessary experience to know what is currently happening in schools. The use of lay assessors was felt to mitigate the credibility gap that could occur if only professional inspectors were used. Adequate and appropriate training was seen as essential to the successful introduction of the proposal. Comments from the FE sector in particular reflected concerns about the cost of training and providing cover for staff released as peer assessors. The CPD potential of the 'peer inspector' role was widely acknowledged and welcomed.
- 6.6 Although HMI-led inspections were to be welcomed some influential bodies were cautious that this of itself did not guarantee consistency as there were always going to be differences in team make up. A very few felt that HMIs would over-dominate the team, others felt that there needed to be an effective moderation procedure to ensure consistency. There were a few comments about the need to have specialist inspectors for specialisms, particularly SEN, and for members of inspection teams to be from the sector they were inspecting.
- 6.7 The very few negative comments were mainly expressions of cynicism about any process of inspection and its potential fairness. Representation from Registered inspectors expressed the view that they had been unfairly denigrated as their role had led to improved standards in education.

Question 12: HMI-led inspections of schools are likely to increase confidence in the findings

6.8 Over three-quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while around a fifth reported a degree of ambivalence. Very few disagreed or strongly disagreed.



[n=236]

Figure 12

6.9 There was considerable overlap between the comments to this statement and those reported in the preceding statement. Increased confidence was largely seen to stem from the greater consistency of process and quality that would emerge between inspection teams led by an Estyn HMI.

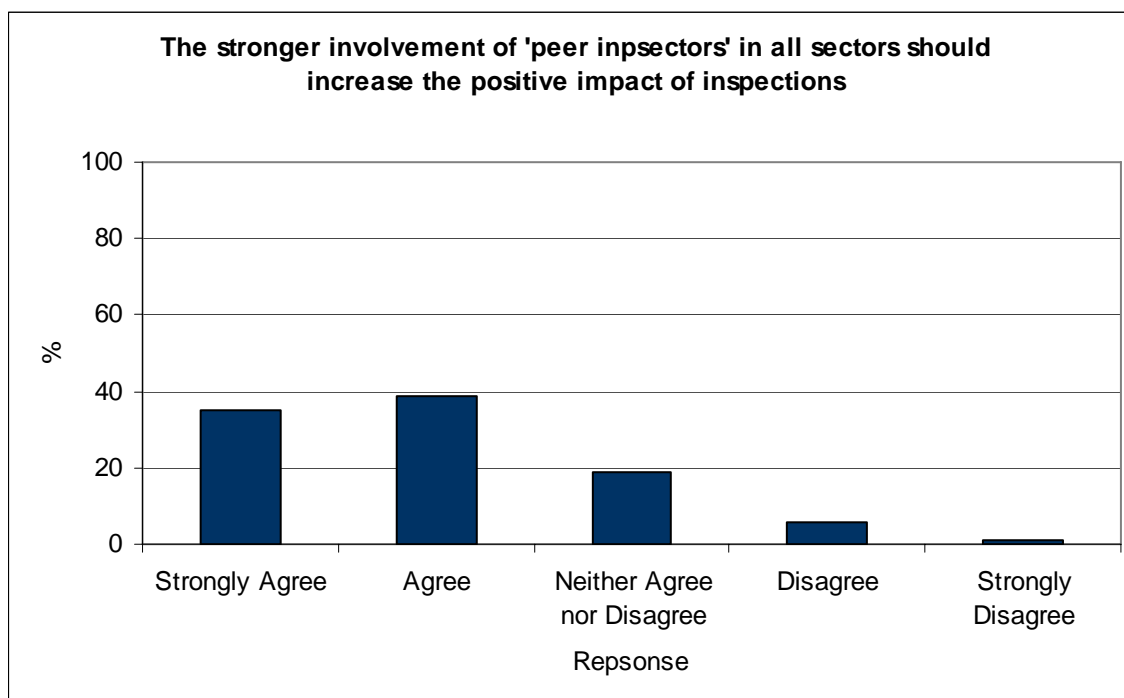
6.10 It was felt that Estyn reports would be seen as more independent from political pressures if the process was HMI led, which in turn would lead to greater confidence from both the public and schools and between sectors. One large LEA, also felt that Estyn led inspections could be more cost effective and provide better opportunities for joining up the work of their school improvement services and the inspection process.

6.11 The more ambivalent responses focussed on the inevitable variation in the characteristics of inspectors themselves – whether RIs or HMIs – resulting in variation in the inspection experience and confidence in it. Estyn's approach to quality control was seen to be important in addressing this.

6.12 While broadly agreeing that HMI-led inspections would increase confidence in inspection findings, there was a concern about how Estyn was going to recruit new inspectors and how the process of inspection was going to be managed in its early stages as many new inspectors would be inexperienced. Longer term, it was felt that the experience gained from each and every inspection would be retained within Estyn and that this knowledge bank would be of great use for further developing the school education system.

Question 13: The stronger involvement of 'peer inspectors' in all sectors should increase the positive impact of inspections

6.13 Again, three-quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while around a fifth were ambivalent.



[n=237]

Figure 13

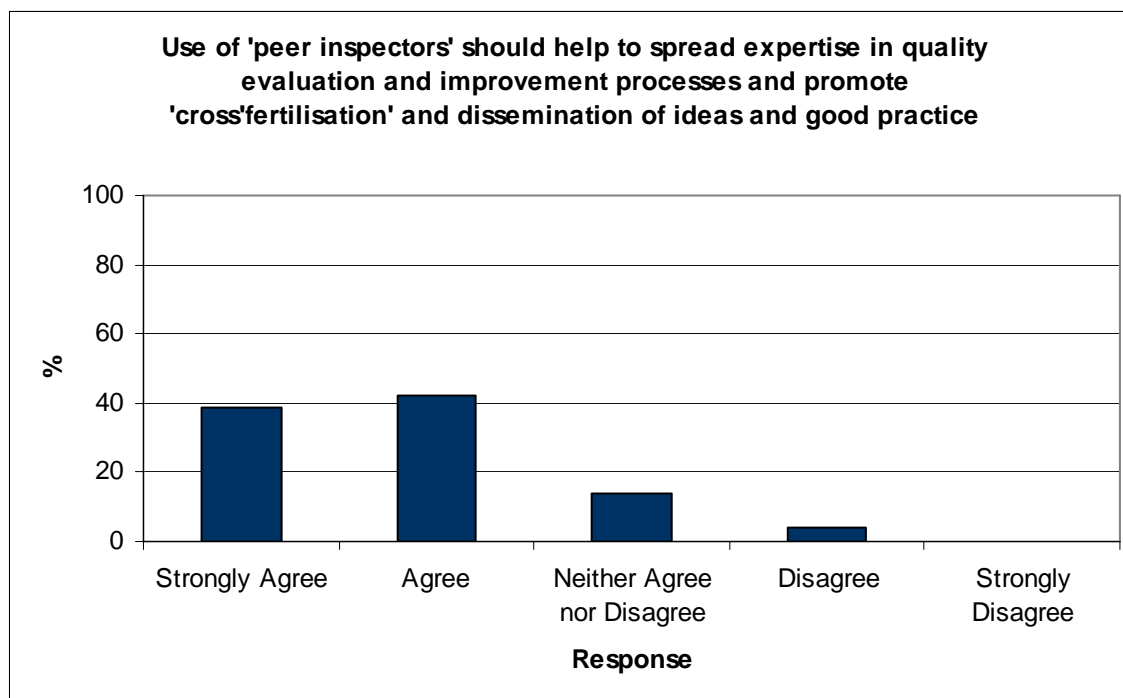
6.14 Comments across the board were very positive about the benefits of peer assessors both at an individual level as an excellent CPD opportunity and for the inspection process itself in terms of having specialist practitioners, who could recognise good practice in their specialism, influencing outcomes. Overall, 'peer inspectors' are seen as having enhanced the rigour and relevance of inspections.

6.15 Some local authority respondents felt the opportunity to become 'peer inspectors' could be extended to LEA school improvement staff and that this would help them to work closely with schools.

- 6.16 In work based learning, predominated by private companies seeking to make profits, peer assessment might be unwelcome as peers are also “the competition”.
- 6.17 Several respondents emphasised the need to train and prepare ‘peer inspectors’ and also to pay them. There were some concerns about the time teachers, and heads in particular, spend outside their schools, but on balance there was strong support for ‘peer inspectors’ in inspections of schools other than their own. There were strong concerns expressed about the financial practicality of schools and FE college releasing staff for this role in the current financial climate and the additional burdens it imposed on both those who undertake the role and those who are observed.
- 6.18 Larger FE colleges felt that the current system of allocating equal weight between sectors for training places worked against them. Several respondents commented on the need to ensure a match between the skills and experience of the ‘peer inspector’ and what was being inspected. Also, small schools would have greater difficulty releasing staff than larger ones, potentially skewing the experience mix of ‘peer inspectors’.
- 6.19 For one minority, recruiting ‘peer inspectors’ was seen as a way of making up for a shortfall in adequate HMIs, whilst for another minority (in FE) their experience had been of poor quality and lack of consistency of judgement adding to the need to carefully recruit, match and train in the first instance. A few commented that feedback mechanisms between ‘peer inspectors’ would be a useful learning and quality process and although there were mechanisms for doing this, through for instance fforwm, processes needed strengthening at a local level to overcome insularity. It was emphasised that the current sharing of information was paid for mainly by schools and colleges themselves and that this limited the extent and quality of what was done.

Question 14: Use of 'peer inspectors' should help to spread expertise in quality evaluation and improvement processes and promote 'cross-fertilisation' and dissemination of ideas and good practice

6.20 There was overall support for this proposal with 81% agreeing or strongly agreeing. There was also strong overlap in narrative responses with previous proposal within this theme.



[n=238]
Figure 14

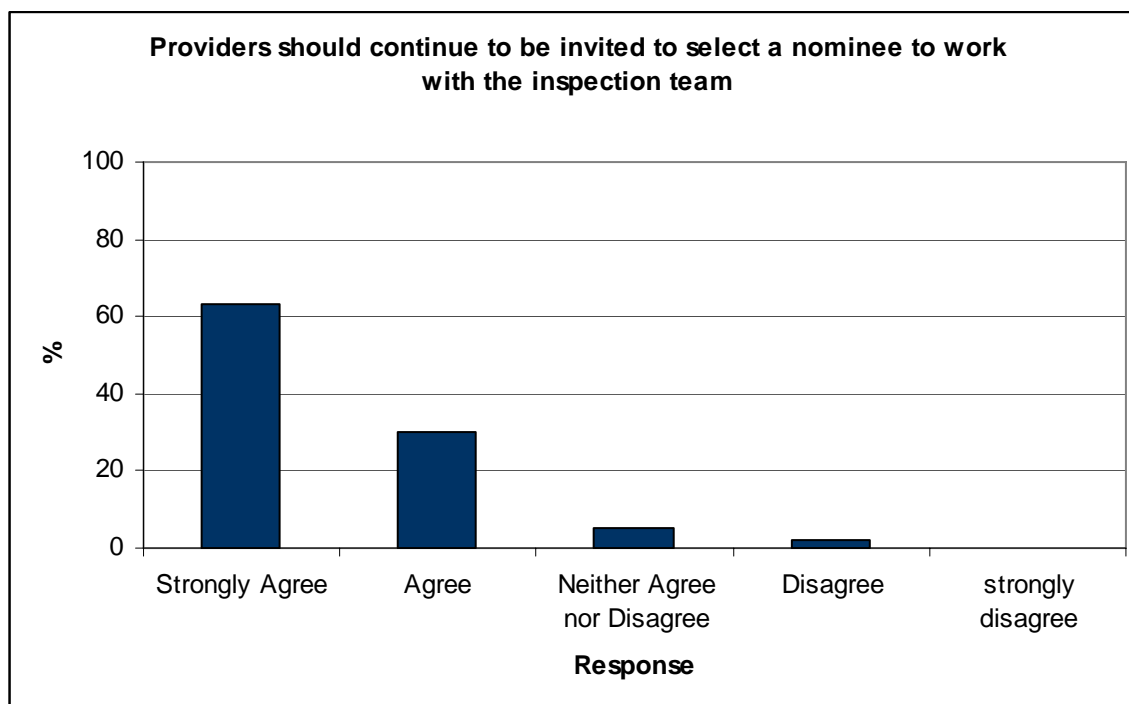
6.21 The use of 'peer inspectors' is supported by a clear majority of respondents. Particularly valued are opportunities for dissemination of good practice and exposure of staff to new ideas. The role of 'peer inspector' as mentor rather than judge was seen as a welcome possibility by some and local authorities say they would welcome the opportunity to work with 'peer inspectors' in school improvement. Some respondents noted that exchanging ideas between professionals was common practice, in any case, although peer inspection provided another route for doing so.

6.22 One comment suggested that the 'peer inspector' could be drawn from other educational professions such as librarians and staff from awarding bodies might also be included. Several stressed the point that 'peer inspectors' need to have empathy and experience in the specialism being inspected: a view strongly held by those working in special schools.

- 6.23 The number of 'peer inspectors' needed was raised by a few, both in relation to time spent away from their own institution and the benefits that might accrue to every school having someone with this expertise on the staff. The benefits most frequently cited were that 'peer inspectors' would be more proactive in planning for inspection in their own school and that they would bring new skills to self-assessment. As self-assessment becomes a more central part of the inspection process this will raise the value of having a qualified 'peer inspector' on the staff.
- 6.24 Although the concept of peer inspection has widespread support, its supporters are not blind to the practicalities of implementation. Reservations focused on the need for careful selection and rigorous training and need to pay teachers to do this so as not to be seen to be introducing a cheap option. Being a good teacher does not automatically lead to being a good inspector as different skills are involved.
- 6.25 Among the very few who disagreed with the proposal, concerns were expressed about a potential conflict of the mentor/inspector role, the lack of a clear process for disseminating good ideas. One FE respondent suggested that subject conferences where 'peer inspectors' relayed best practice might be one way of doing this. A very few thought that disseminating good practice is what Estyn ought to be doing anyway. One respondent thought that the process was designed to train out and stifle dissenting voices.
- 6.26 In the careers sector there was felt that, because it is so small, 'peer inspectors' may have difficulty being seen to be objective or impartial. One school suggested that if inspectors were to become more advice and mentoring oriented, 'peer inspectors' needed to do the same.

Question 15: Providers should continue to be invited to select a nominee to work with the inspection team

6.27 This proposal met with overwhelming support with 93% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.



[n=237]

Figure 15

6.28 The main focus on the positive comments was that the proposal shows commitment to a partnership approach. Many respondents who provided comments felt that the role of a nominee is essential to ensure the inspection team are aware of all the issues before making judgments (including the context in which the provider operates) and to ensure the inspection process is conducted fairly. Compressed time for inspections makes the nominees' role more crucial as they can guide the inspection team more quickly to the important issues.

6.29 Several respondents, although in agreement with the proposal, felt there should be greater support for the nominee. Two respondents who had acted as a nominee in the past noted that the process was stressful (and neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal). Providing a comprehensive training programme for nominees prior to inspection was suggested by one LEA. Others stressed the need for the nominee to be involved in a comprehensive briefing process. Reflections on the English experience of nominees tended to support this: effective nominees were thoroughly briefed by the inspectorate.

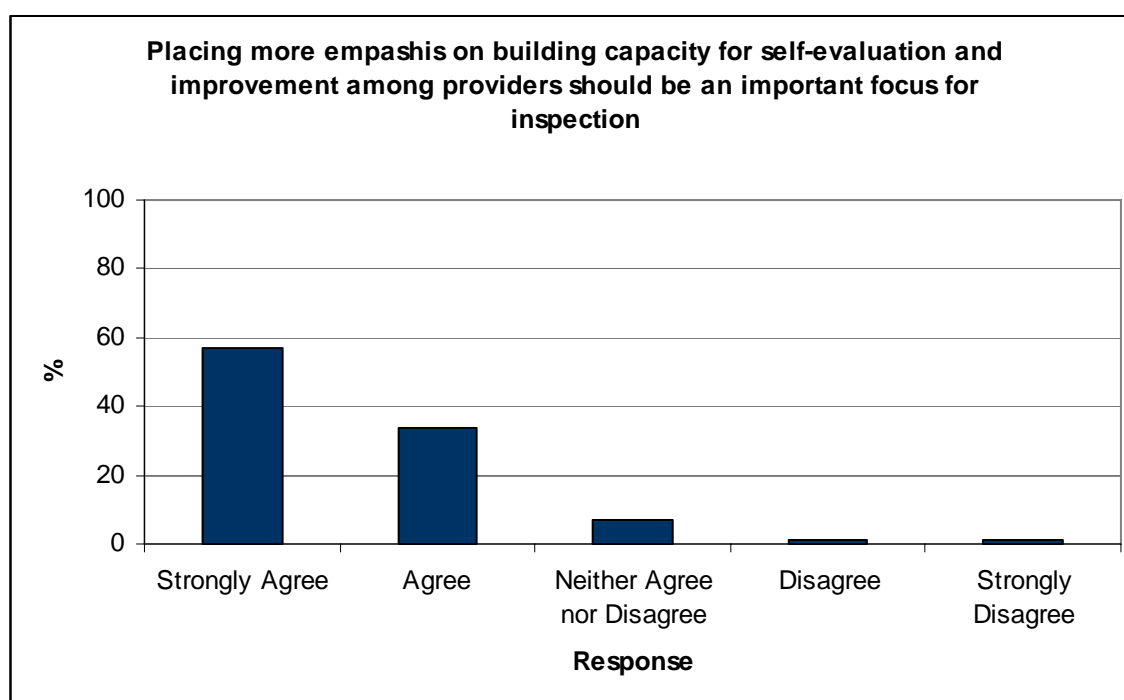
- 6.30 One school response put forward that nominees are used inconsistently across inspection teams.
- 6.31 Two organisations (a work-based training provider and careers company) suggested there should be more than one nominee for inspections of large providers. Conversely, it was suggested that small schools would find it difficult to commit much resource to the nominee role.
- 6.32 Very few respondents who had worked in the school sector and commented suggested the nominee should not be a member of the senior management team, but an experienced teacher (with TLR points).
- 6.33 The very few negative responses did not provide comments.

7. More emphasis on building capacity for self evaluation and improvement

- 7.1 The new proposals are based on a more robust role for provider self-evaluation. They are also designed to promote effective self-evaluation and to align with national initiatives such as the School Effectiveness Framework and the post-16 Quality and Effectiveness Framework.

Question 16: Placing more emphasis on building capacity for self-evaluation and improvement among providers should be an important focus for inspection

- 7.2 The proposal received considerable support, with 91% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 2% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.



[n=237]

Figure 16

- 7.3 Approximately a third of those commenting suggested self-evaluation to be an important part of the continuous quality improvement of organisations, recognising it as an ongoing process, rather than a stochastic process driven by inspection visits. *“In a regime that is focused on supporting improvement it would be in everyone's interest to develop accurate self-evaluation and action planning with Estyn providing the checks, balance and expertise to support this process”* (Organisation response).

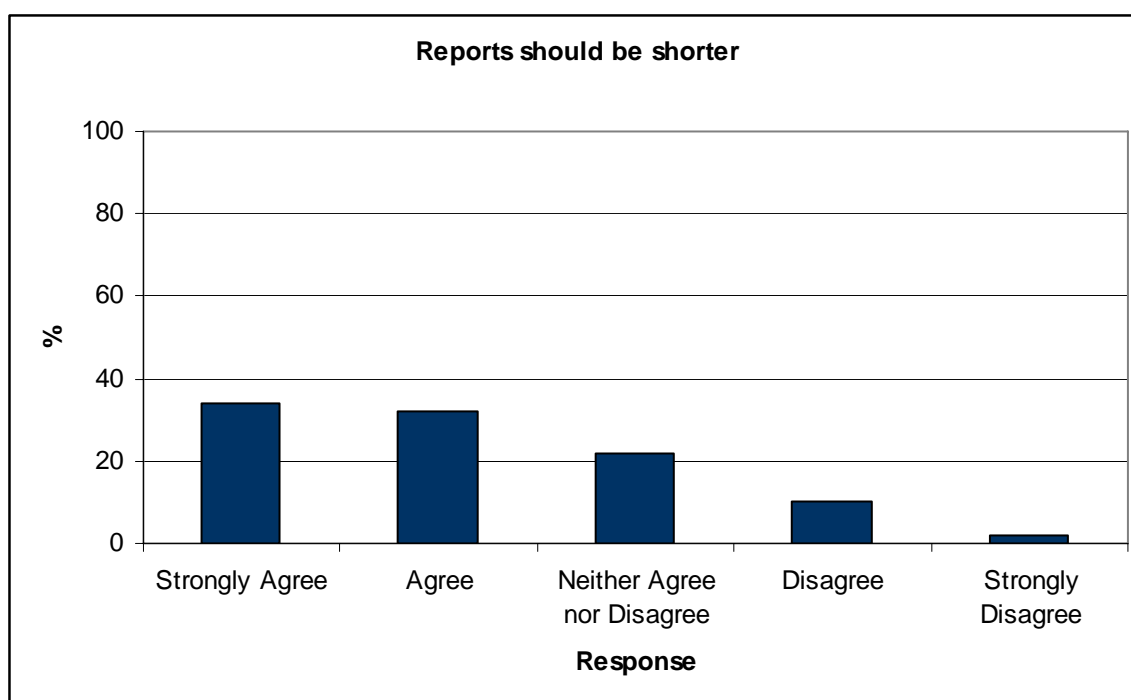
- 7.4 A small number of respondents suggested increased emphasis on self evaluation to be important in encouraging schools, and other learning providers, to develop structured approaches to assessing where the organisation currently is, where it aims to be, and what actions need to be implemented to achieve this. Furthermore, a respondent involved with inspections suggested *"Quality improvement is most effective when providers have honestly identified and acknowledged areas for improvement themselves"*.
- 7.5 A couple of comments also suggested that with shorter notice periods for inspections, schools have a greater need to maintain up-to-date Self-Assessment Reports (SAR).
- 7.6 One respondent felt that *"inspection approaches based on the external validation of rigorous self-evaluation will ensure that improvement can take place continuously"*. They believed such an approach would need to be linked to quality improvement, with *"ongoing monitoring of service delivery and associated improvement being continuous, rather than the current cyclical peaks of activity before or after inspection"*.
- 7.7 In moving to a greater emphasis on self-evaluation, a significant number of those commenting suggested a need for both effective training, to help develop the relevant skills to make objective and robust assessments, and support networks, through for example LEAs, Estyn or *"making use of the SEF associates with recent headship experience"* (Organisation response). Reference was also made to best practice in specific sectors (e.g. FE) from which examples of best practice can be applied across all sectors.
- 7.8 The primary reservation expressed by a small number of respondents related to ensuring self-evaluation is a credible process by evidencing and corroborating self-assessments: a couple of comments suggested establishments may be prone to overstating their 'achievements'.
- 7.9 One other notable concern raised by a few respondents related to the potential for an increased burden brought about by greater emphasis on self-evaluation.
- 7.10 Of wider interest, two teaching unions took opposing views with one strongly agreeing with the proposal and the other disagreeing due to the potential increased burden on schools. Notwithstanding this, both unions recognised the need for a precise framework to be developed, with one commenting it is *"absolutely crucial that only one self-evaluation tool is developed that can be used for inspection and other purposes. We are concerned that the School Effectiveness Framework self-evaluation tool is currently under development. There must not be a proliferation of models. We are not persuaded as yet that the SEF model should be that single model however. Members have found it imprecise and of little practical value"*.

8. Clearer, more accessible reports

- 8.1 Estyn propose to produce shorter and sharper reports that will focus only on the most important features and key strengths and shortcomings that have been used to determine the grade for the quality of the provision. Other than the front page, explanatory pages and appendices, Estyn want the main body of the report to be no longer than about five pages.

Question 17: Reports should be shorter

- 8.2 The proposal for shorter reports was supported by a majority of respondents (66%), with only 12% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal.



[n=234]

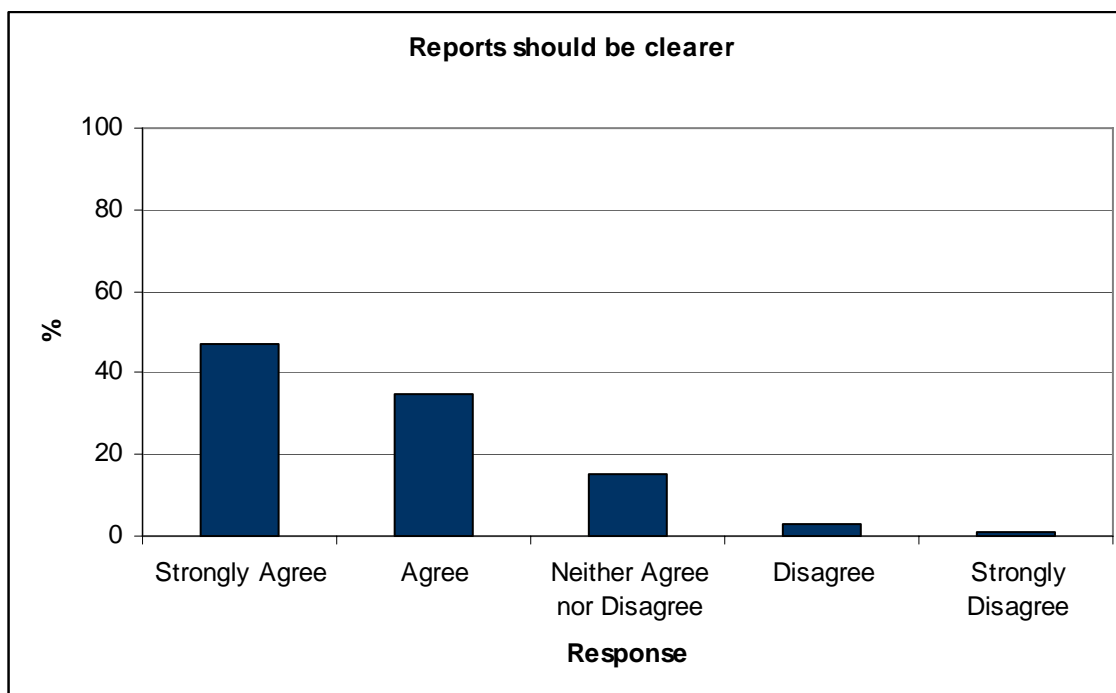
Figure 17

- 8.3 Of those agreeing, a number of respondents suggested the reports currently tended not to be user-friendly: general perceptions included the reports being too repetitive and not as succinct as they could be: several respondents suggested there was scope to remove the "preamble" in reports.
- 8.4 A number of suggestions were received relating to improving the format of reports, with possible implications for their length: summary tables and bulleted overviews were suggested as appropriate means of highlighting key information in a concise and user-friendly manner.

- 8.5 Several respondents who agreed with the proposal did however have reservations about becoming too preoccupied with length in its own right, commenting that recommendations and grades allocated need to be clearly justified and articulated. Ensuring reports are concisely written may in turn result in shorter reports.
- 8.6 The focus on length per se was the primary issue arising amongst those who did not agree with the comment (encompassing those who 'Neither Agreed nor Disagreed', 'Disagreed' or 'Strongly Disagreed'). Comments suggested reports should not be restricted to a maximum length, as this should be dictated by the findings of the inspection, clearly outlining strengths and areas for development: "*Reports need to be succinct and easily readable - however the priority is that they report accurately and help the school to grow by the comments they make*".
- 8.7 Notwithstanding this, it was however suggested by one organisation that "*the written report should not be seen as just the only feedback on inspection outcomes*" for teaching establishments.
- 8.8 A small number of respondents (incorporating both those agreeing and disagreeing with the statement) expressed concerns that shorter reports may remove scope to convey the unique character of teaching establishments.
- 8.9 Several respondents considered shorter reports as being more applicable to lay audiences, for whom the more detailed and technical aspects of inspection may be less important than overarching findings: summary reports may therefore provide a more accessible alternative whilst allowing schools to receive more detailed written feedback.

Question 18: Reports should be clearer

8.10 There was clear support for reports being clearer with 82% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposal. Only 3% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.



[n=236]

Figure 18

8.11 Out of 79 responses, the most common suggestion (8 respondents) was to eliminate the jargon used by Estyn in reports which makes it difficult for the reader to follow and can be off-putting to audiences. One of the major teaching unions in the UK suggested “*current reports have evolved into cumbersome and almost unreadable documents that often contribute very little to the future development of a school*”: Addressing this issue was suggested by individuals and organisations alike to be important in making the reports accessible to a wide range of lay stakeholders, whilst also providing unambiguous direction to professionals.

8.12 In a similar vein, respondents (3 responses) also felt the inspection reports were too detailed with too many statistics making them difficult to access for all audiences (e.g. all parents).

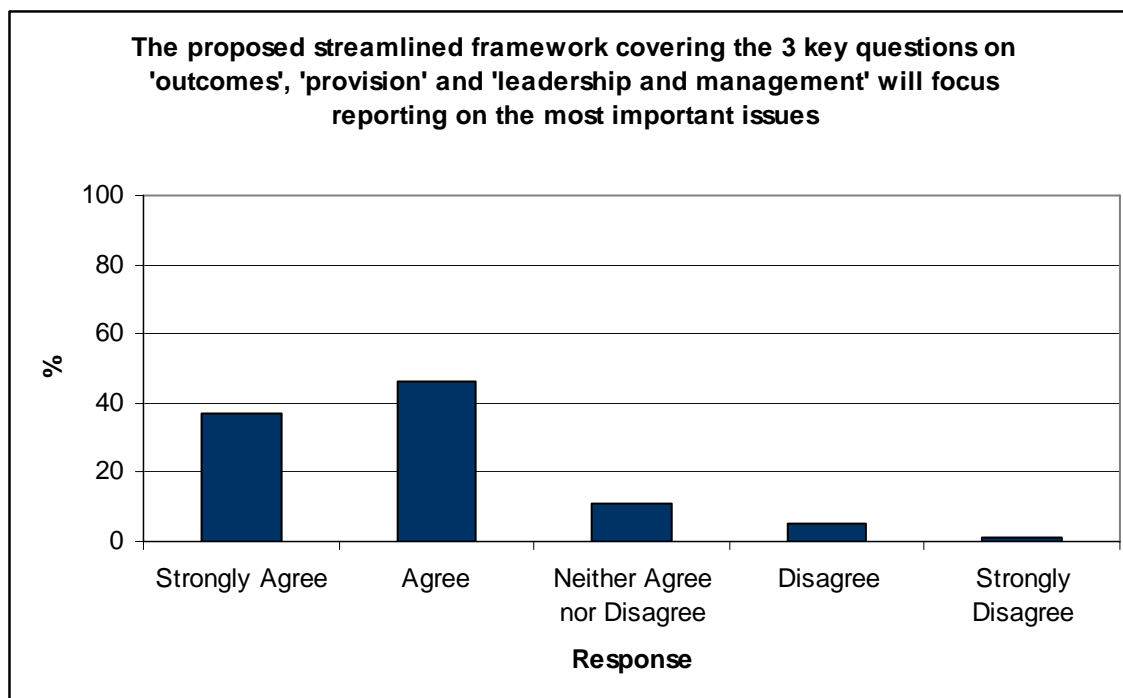
8.13 Other, more specific changes to reports, included:

- The report incorporating minority ethnic achievement and provision for supporting English as an additional language (including bilingual support) in a consistent and rigorous manner throughout instead of a separate section
- Presenting information regarding effectiveness of a school's service for deaf children in a standalone section for ease of reference
- Clear evidence of outputs and outcomes with comprehensive recommendations regarding short-comings
- Analysis of data should be clearly explained and better standardised so as to increase transparency and make comparisons between schools fairer
- Writing reports in a less formulaic manner, ensuring the “*essence*” of a school is effectively conveyed.

- Where respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, comments suggested reports were already clear.

Question 19: The proposed streamlined framework covering the 3 key questions on 'outcomes', 'provision' and 'leadership and management' will focus reporting on the most important issues

8.14 67% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed streamline framework focusing reporting on the most important issues. Only 12% strongly disagreed or disagreed.



[n=235]

Figure 19

8.15 A minority welcomed the proposal with the 3 key questions eliminating the repetition evident in the current 7 key questions.

8.16 A few respondents questioned the intention of streamlining the framework by simply merging the current 7 key questions into the 3 questions proposed. Both sets of questions appear to encompass the same issues so it is unclear how these will create a greater focus in reporting.

8.17 A very few respondents felt not enough detail had been provided to make a definitive decision on this proposal. They required more information on what is to be *“included in each key question”*.

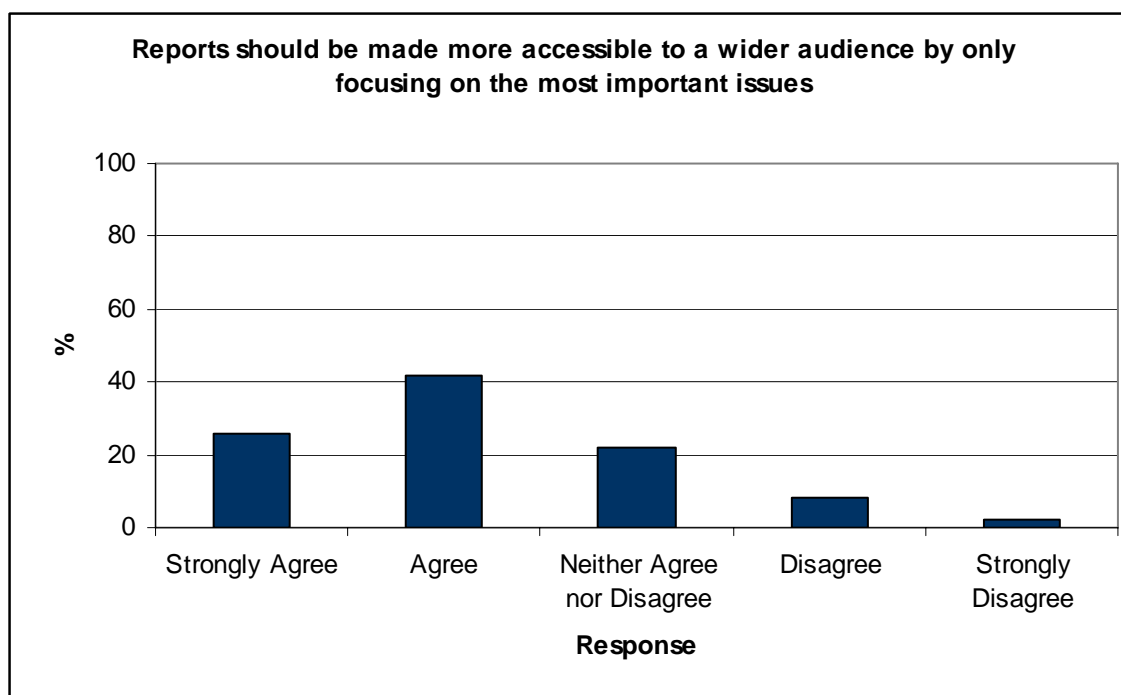
8.18 One respondent agreed that the proposal will focus reporting on the most important issues but wanted assurances that the *“adoption of such an approach does not result in an increase in workload for schools and individual teachers”*.

8.19 There were a range of individual comments made by respondents dealing with terminology, including:

- There should be separate headings in Key Question 3 for Leadership and Management, Quality and Resource
- There is a need to include a section on self-improvement, monitoring and review.

Question 20: Reports should be made more accessible to a wider audience by only focusing on the most important issues

8.20 There was agreement for this proposal with 68% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing. Only 10% disagreed, showing there is a need for reports to only focus on the most important issues.



[n=236]

Figure 20

8.21 Although respondents agreed with the proposal, a few pointed out that only focusing on the most important issues might omit information required by schools and providers, leaving them disadvantaged. A lack of detailed information could hinder the development of provider improvement plans.

8.22 It was suggested that both a summary and detailed report should be available for audiences to choose between (e.g. summary reports would potentially be more

useful to parents whilst detailed reports would be more useful to schools and providers). One respondent commented *"this practice works well in the HE sector"*.

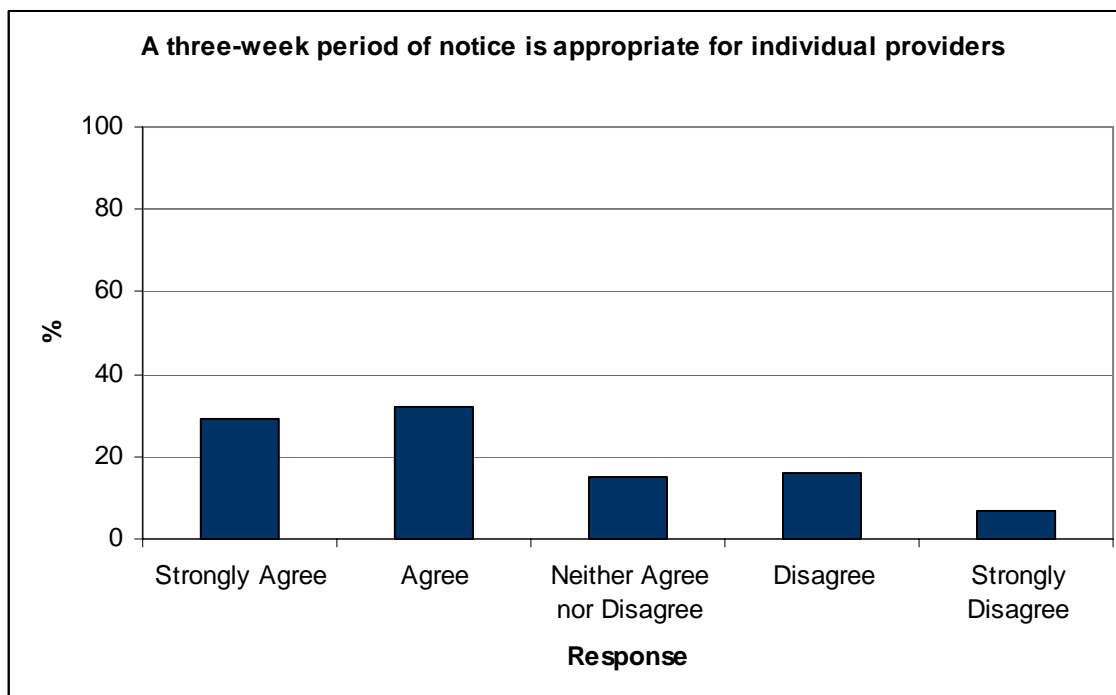
- 8.23 Another few respondents mentioned that the reports are currently widely accessible as they can be accessed on the Estyn website. They see no difference in what is being proposed and what is occurring currently.
- 8.24 A very few respondents expressed the need to ensure minimal jargon is included in reports to enable all audiences to understand the reports. One respondent stressed the need for summary reports to be *"available to all interested parties in electronic form"*.
- 8.25 Three responses targeted the negative aspect of only focusing on the most important issues with comments ranging from *"what is there to hide"* and *"this could give out the wrong message"* to *"it's a nice idea but costly"*.
- 8.26 Two respondents were mindful of the need for reports to include learners with special educational needs. One felt *"current reports can lack detail on provision for deaf children"*, which will be further compromised with less detailed reports whilst the other recommended such sections to *"include illustrative comment rather than the mere repeating of a grade"*.
- 8.27 One respondent recommended that reports should *"clearly emphasise the most important issues by prominently identifying the provider's characteristic strengths and weaknesses"*.

9. Shorter period of notice

9.1 Currently providers get between three and six months notice of an inspection. From 2010 onwards Estyn proposed to let providers know the actual dates of the inspection about three weeks (15 working days) before it takes place. This will only apply to the inspection of individual providers, as area and partnership inspections will need longer notice. For area and partnership inspections Estyn propose to give four weeks notice.

Question 21: A three-week period of notice is appropriate for individual providers

9.2 The majority (61%) of respondents agreed with this proposal.



[n=233]

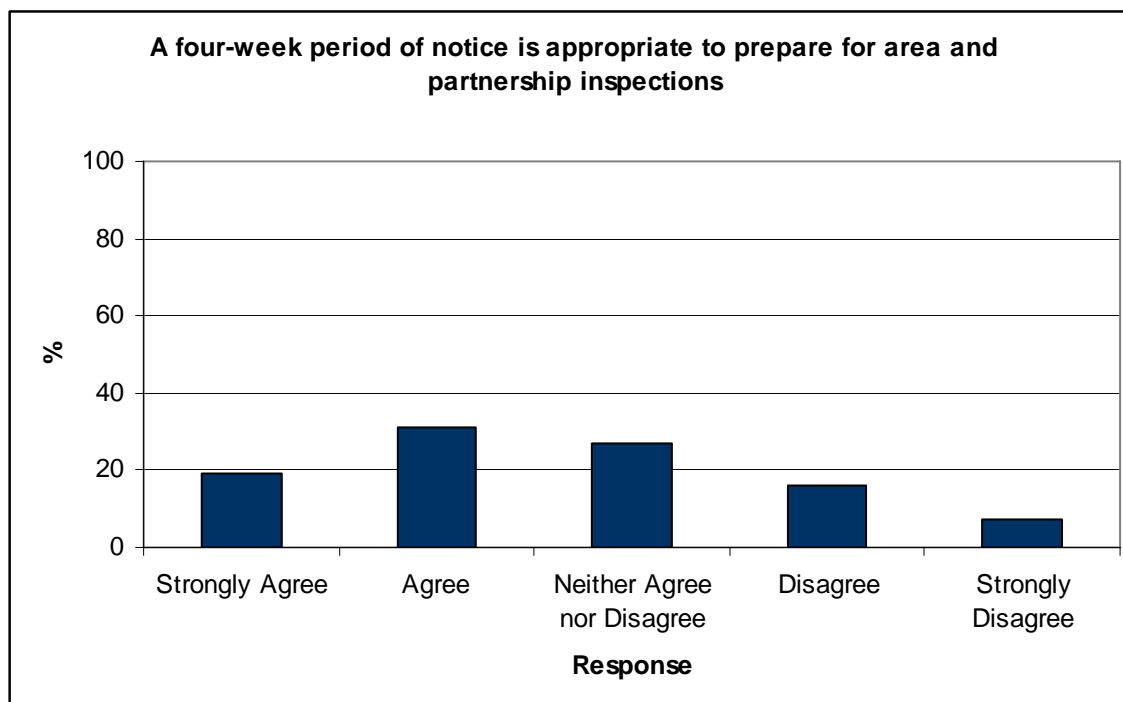
Figure 20

9.3 It was widely thought that a shorter notice period of three weeks would “*negate a certain element of stage management*” (Organisation response), giving a more accurate picture of the actual quality of the education and training being delivered and therefore enable inspections to identify strengths and weaknesses that can then be acted on. Several commented that this should in turn increase public confidence.

- 9.4 The stress of inspections was clearly a concern for a number of respondents with comments stating that reducing the period of notice to three-weeks would alleviate some stress.
- 9.5 It was thought, by several respondents, that self evaluation should mean that a provider would have evidence at hand for an ad hoc inspection. An FE representative body suggested the sector already employs rigorous self assessment practices, supported by a culture of sharing and benchmarking, and as a result *"is confident... its provision is of a high quality at all times and would therefore welcome shorter lead in times to demonstrate this"*.
- 9.6 A small number of respondents also suggested that Estyn could add value by producing an outline self-evaluation form for schools and departments. It was thought that this would facilitate greater consistency, and standardisation of data would enable Estyn to assimilate the information more effectively.
- 9.7 Amongst those agreeing, a small number of process issues were identified, including notification and cover arrangements for 'peer inspectors', and confidentiality arising from this.
- 9.8 A quarter of respondents disagreed with this proposal. Comments centred around logistical issues, requiring more time to prepare evidence and the difficulties it would create with timetabling meetings and training the nominee. A small number of comments also suggested stress levels would in fact be higher under a notice period as short as three weeks, with schools being constantly on *"Amber alert"* (Individual response).
- 9.9 A couple of comments made by those disagreeing with the proposal suggested three weeks to be too long as a lead in to inspections: *"while some time is necessary to gather documentation, this should be a question of collation and not preparation – schools should be ready for inspection with little notice"* (Organisation response).
- 9.10 A very few respondents also commented that providers would have a longer indication of when they will be inspected as they could make an educated guess based on the cycle of inspections. Consequently, it was noted by one organisation that *"this shorter notice period will be compromised if Estyn sticks to inspecting schools at the same point in the cycle as [currently]... three weeks become six years in this context"*: similar comments were made by several other individuals and organisations.

Question 22: A four-week period of notice is appropriate to prepare for area and partnership inspections

9.11 Half of respondents agreed with this proposal (50%), although a minority (27%) neither agreed nor disagreed: approx one third of those commenting (across all response categories) cited a similar rationale for their response to that given for Question 22.



[n=229]

Figure 21

9.12 The main focus on the positive comments was that the proposal will increase public confidence that inspections are based on provision that has not been 'stage managed' and give a more accurate picture of the actual quality of the education and training being delivered.

9.13 A few who were in agreement with the proposal commented that self evaluation should mean that a provider would have evidence at hand for an ad hoc inspection, although of these two called for the implementation of appropriate common systems for the collection of self-evaluation information.

9.14 A few respondents (including those who agreed and disagreed with a four-week notice period) felt that a shorter notice period would alleviate the stress induced during the period prior to an inspection.

- 9.15 A minority of respondents (23%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal: a number of these represented sectors which have not yet been subject to area or partnership inspections (i.e. primary and secondary schools).
- 9.16 A few comments suggested four weeks to be too short a period to gather the evidence base across a number of partners and to work out a timetable for visits, given the "*complexity and time consuming nature of partnership working*" (Organisation response). Notwithstanding this, several respondents noted that they would agree with a shorter notice period than there is at present: six weeks was suggested to be more appropriate by a very small number of respondents.